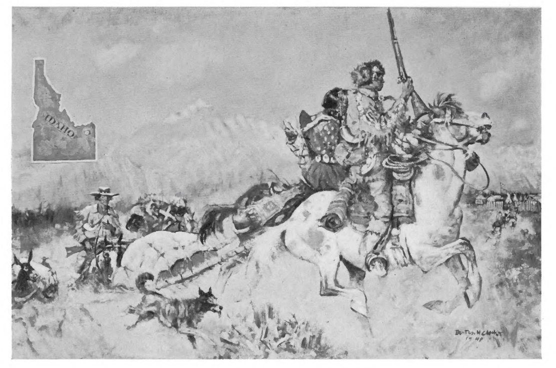


BLUE BOOK
MAGAZINE
SEPTEMBER, 1948
25 Cents
THESE UNITED STATES... XXI—Idaho... Painted by BENTON CLARK
SEVENTH CAVALRY STAGHOUND...a Complete Novel by FAIRFAX DOWNEY...THE FABULOUS FIVE...a remarkable OSS adventure by RICHARD M. KELLY



THESE UNITED STATES . . . . XXI—IDAHO

"Good Morning—It Is Sunup!"

THE Shoshoni origin of the word *Idaho* (according to Cornelius Brosnan in his "History of the State of Idaho) provides a key word for understanding the spirit and genius of the young commonwealth: "*E-dah-how*"—"Good morning; it is sunup!"

The region which later became Idaho was visited first by the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1805. Soon afterward pioneers of the British and American fur companies scouted the district. And in 1810 Andrew Henry of the Missouri Fur Company built the post our artist has depicted on Henry's Fork of the Snake River—the first building by a U. S. citizen west of the Continental Divide. A year later a party of over fifty men (whose Idaho adventures are recounted by Washington Irving in his "Astoria") was sent overland by John Jacob Astor to the mouth of the Columbia, and in large measure pioneered what became the famous Oregon Trail.

The War of 1812 compelled Henry and other American fur traders to abandon the region. Not until 1834, when Nathaniel Wyeth of Boston built Fort Hall on the upper Snake, was competition for the rich fur treasure of Idaho resumed. In 1836 the Reverend Henry Spalding and his wife, under the auspices of the American Board for Foreign Missions, established a school for Indians on Lapwai Creek near Lewiston; and it was in their home that the first white child in the State was born and reared. Not until the Treaty of 1846, however, was the United States confirmed in its possession of the great area to which the explorations of Lewis and Clark gave it so valid a claim.

Fur, as we have seen, was the first motive of the Idaho pathfinders. And for long there was little settlement, although many travelers to the Pacific on the Oregon Trail passed through. In 1860, however, placer gold was discovered on Oro Fino Creek by E. D. Pierce; discoveries of gold and silver ledges soon followed; and in 1863 Idaho Territory was organized—including, in addition to its present domain, portions of Wyoming, Montana, Nebraska and the Dakotas!

Besides the trappers, traders, prospectors and miners, Mormons from Utah moved into south Idaho; and the rapid increase of the white population as usual provoked difficulty with the Indians. There were three serious outbreaks of hostilities, and one expedition against the Indians suffered a severe defeat in Whitebird Cañon. Finally General Howard overcame the hostiles near Kamiah, and fine old Chief Joseph's famous retreat followed—to end at last in his capture by the forces of General Miles in Montana. One further outbreak of the Bannocks culminated soon after the death of their leader Buffalo Horn.

Mining is still important in Idaho; but stock raising and agriculture have steadily increased; Idaho also boasts some of the finest virgin timber remaining in America; and that strange long magnificent river the Snake, which at some points has cut a cañon five thousand feet deep, offers with its tributaries immensely valuable possibilities in hydro-electric development. . . . A great State—the biggest State in the Union, some citizens aver, if it were only ironed out flat!

Readers' Comment*

Real Brotherhood

This is to thank you for your stirring tales of World War II.

One of the grandest things I have ever experienced in life was that fine spirit of camaraderie—so deep, intense, and thrilling—between young American men, far from home and united in a just and common cause. I never expect to know its like again. That was *real* brotherhood. Friends were real friends then, with a closeness and a loyalty unmatched in these days.

Give us more of these quickening tales of fact and experience, stories that thrill and recall anew the comradeship and high devotion to duty that ennobled our own lives once, and must now inspire your other readers as well.

They are real American sagas, each an Iliad of courage and undaunted purpose. They reaffirm our flagging faith in the basic nobility of man, and set an example for the coming generations to revere and follow. They contribute to the astonishing epic of still-young America which, please God, will flourish long and some day endow the earth with the full-fledged fulfillment of its mighty—but as yet unrealized—ideals of individual liberty and social equality for all.

William B. Lourim

From an Old-Timer

It is with pleasure I announce myself as being one of your oldest readers. Started as a young girl—now I am 68—and still reading it.

I am writing this to disagree with the reader who asked you to bring back serials and to print Blue Book on slick paper. I ask you to please not do either. We older people should be given consideration too. Many of us do not have the memories we had when younger, and often it is difficult to recall the last installment of a serial from the month previous.

Also the dull paper is easier on tired old eyes. We who wear glasses sometimes find slick paper glary. Therefore I enjoy the Blue Book for these two reasons particularly.

Mrs. Camille Treat

*The Editors of Blue Book are glad to receive letters of constructive criticism and suggestions; and for the ones we publish each month we will pay the writers ten dollars each.

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A Complete Book-length Novel

A Novelette

Nine Short Stories

Stories of Fact and Experience

Special Features

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Sid

MAYBE YOU HAVE MET A MAN SOMEWHAT LIKE HIM. IN ANY CASE YOU WILL FIND HIS CAREER WELL WORTH READING ABOUT, FOR HE DEALT WITH LIFE IN NO AMATEUR SPIRIT.

by PETE PEDERSEN



"Look at this, Dan. See this. I just miss. Just that much. But I had to find out for sure."

IT was the first time I had seen Willie Coulter since the war. We dropped into an uptown saloon, had a couple of drinks and talked about some of the things that had happened to us. Willie looked good. He was working for an advertising agency and getting fat at it. The war hadn't hurt him much. He talked with the same old spirit. I was glad to see him.

We laughed over stories about the old college bunch. Willie had kept in touch with them. He filled me in on all the gang. Then the second drink arrived and there was a lull.

"Willie," I said. "Tell me: Ever run across that kid who used to come to our apartment at school? Sid—Sid March."

Willie shook his head. "Someone said he was back, Danny. But I haven't seen him. Often wondered where such a fellow might end up. Obvious misfit, that one. Honestly, Dan, I never could figure what you saw in him."

I tapped carefully with my cigarette. "I never tried to figure it out, Willie. I guess I just liked Sid."

THE first time I saw Sid March was on opening football practice at high school. It was nearly freezing weather. He was wearing a pair of floppy tennis shoes with holes in them. His feet must've been blue with cold. Sid had a great mop of coarse blond hair that hung down his neck. His face was thin and strangely lined for a fifteen-year-old kid—as if he'd been squinting for a long time.

We shared the same locker in the dressing-room. Sid didn't have much to say. About all I knew was that he came from Blue Street, where he'd played ball with the Tigers, a sandlot club. Blue Street, starting at an iron works and ending in Chinatown, was the center of the toughest district in the city.

Sid wasn't built for the game. He had the speed and a nice knack of running in an open field. And he tried. Lord, how he tried! But it was his incredibly thin body and the sickening way he'd try to smash through a line that made you wonder what he was doing on a football field. Long after the squad had gone in for their showers, Sid would be circling the running-track, building his legs and wind.

A couple of us started kidding him about it one night when he came in puffing. Sid stood there staring, his narrow chest rattling as he fought for breath. Then he smiled. I looked at his eyes. There was no humor in them—no humor at all. I was socked hard in the pit of my stomach by the way the skin stretched tight against his gums and left deep straight lines running through his face. Somebody laughed a bit nervously, and we went back to our dressing. Nobody fooled with Sid after that.

After three weeks' turnout, the squad was cut in half. Those left were divided into the varsity and B squads. Sid was with the B group. I explained it to him that night in the dressing-room. "It doesn't mean much . . . Gives the coach a chance to work better . . . Lots of good players come up from the B's."

"Sure, I know," Sid said. "But I won't be one of them. I'm turning in my suit tonight."

"You can't feel that way," I said. "You've got to think you're good enough, or you'll never make it. What's the use otherwise?"

"That's just it," Sid returned in his soft, halting voice. "There is no use. I guess I knew it all the time, but I figured I was gonna see for sure. I'd try my best, all right enough. Then if I didn't make it, well—" And he shrugged his thin shoulders seriously. "Then there wouldn't be any excuses. I can see now I haven't got it. So it's all right. I just wanted to make sure. I had to do that."

"You through playing ball, then?" I asked.

Sid smiled briefly. "No, not exactly. The Tigers can still use me. They'll be glad to get me back."

Next Sunday I went down to the Blue Street public park. The Tigers were playing an uptown club. It was a grudge affair, and quite a few of the Blue Street people came to watch.

Sid played in the tailback spot for the Tigers. The club hadn't much coaching. They made up their plays in the huddle. The Tigers' strategy consisted of centering the ball to Sid, and then getting out of the way as he scampered around the ends. It was a satisfactory system. Sid ran to five touchdowns during the game. He could really run. Give a hip to a tackler, then take it away. He was the kid, all right.

I talked to him in the field-house after the game. He was sweating hard. His face was whipped cold by the wind. "You were an All-American in there today, boy," I said. "Old Red Grange himself."

"This isn't very good football," Sid said slowly. "These guys are suckers for a change-of-pace. They run right into a stiff-arm. Your club at school could probably beat us a hundred to nothing."

Sid buried his hands deep in the pockets of his dirty cords. He shifted his feet and squinted at me. "But I'm the best football player the Tigers have. Maybe not the toughest, maybe not the brainiest; but I'm the best player on the team."

Sid's tense face softened, and he drew his left eyelid tight shut.

"You understand?"

I looked at him with a silly grin. "Sure, I understand."

He nodded at me, and we were friends.

I LOOKED Sid up at school and arranged some classes with him. We were never pals, but always good friends. I don't think Sid ever had a real pal. We went to fights and ball-games. He showed me a way to sneak into the auditorium through the heating-plant in the basement. We got into all the big shows that way.

I used to go to some of the joints on Blue Street with him. Sid was at home here. There was no fumbling or pausing. Sid would point out the places to go and the places not to go. We went to a spot where Jack Bennett and his gang hung out. They were wanted for some vague hijacking job. There was a joint near Chinatown where we'd listen to a broad-faced Mexican sing dirty songs. "He beat two murder raps," Sid would explain. "Nice guy when he isn't mad."

Sid knew them all. His favorite was old Al. We'd usually find him at the Turf, drinking beer. "How's the fight game these days?" Sid would ask. Al would mumble a few swear-words and pull at his ragged gray beard.

"They don't teach the stuff I know any more." His eyes would fill with water. "I learned mine from the real boys—Gans and Corbett and those. Why, you know what Gans used to tell me? 'Al,' he'd say to me, 'Al, if that guy hooks me again, I'll knock him out.' . . . And damned if he wouldn't the very next time the guy tried a hook . . . That was Joe Gans, you know . . . 'You can't beat a straight, Al' . . . That's what Joe Gans would tell me. I'm seventy years old, and you can't lay a hand on me."

Al would shuffle around, weaving, bobbing, snorting loudly. His tired, vacant eyes would light up. Sid would step in and swing an awkward round-house. The old man would cackle in glee as he moved close and flicked a straight left into Sid's face. "A man swing at me, do I block it? Do I?" he panted. "I do not. I beat him to it—with a straight. Nothing can beat a straight. I learned that from Gans and Corbett and Choynski and those. They don't teach that any more."

SID would dance around, taking a few jolts in the face. Then he'd stop and pat Al admiringly on the back. "That was something, now, wasn't it, Dan? Quick as a cat, that Al. Quite a fighter, old Al is."

I never did find where Sid lived. About all I knew of his family was that a brother had been killed in a gang fight some years before. Sid never talked about it, and I never asked him. We just kicked it around together. We were young, and it was fun. . . .

"I never said much about it, Dan, but I couldn't understand why you let Sid in our poker games." Willie Coulter's voice jarred me back to the present. I shrugged my shoulders. It was a hard thing to explain, even if I'd cared to explain it.

"I'll admit he got under my skin, Danny boy. He wasn't our kind, really. A nice enough fellow at times. But obviously out of place."

Out of place? Yes, that's what Willie would say about Sid March. I met Willie my first week at college. Both of us were somewhat awed by the place, and we started eating lunch together. We decided it would be better to live near the campus, so we rented an apartment. It was a basement layout where the tenants would be used to the noise. We were sure we had the place where genius would bloom best.

I suppose I could have forgotten Sid. The exciting whirl of college life easily eclipsed high-school friends who remained behind. Then one evening I got a phone-call from Sid. He'd been trying to locate me. He wanted to come over when it was convenient. I told him we had poker games every Friday night. That's how he met Willie and the boys, and the whole thing started.

I told the fellows about Sid. "He's not a college kid," I explained. "Just a friend of mine from high school." It was a silly thing to say, but it seemed important then. "Comes from down on Blue Street. Might be a good fellow to fill in on a poker game. He's a friend of mine, so be nice, won't you now?"

I don't know why I had to say that. I wouldn't have said that about anyone else I knew. But it seemed I had to explain Sid some way.

The boys looked at Sid with more than passing interest. He was certainly a contrast to the confident, happy college crowd. His blond head was shaggy from a studied neglect of the barber. He wore a long, oversized trench-coat that gave him an odd, shapeless appearance. Later the boys would laugh about the coat among themselves. They called it his "Errol Flynn" coat. It wasn't very funny, but they laughed about it.

Nobody bothered Sid. They made room for him in the game. He wouldn't have much to say. I'd catch him turning his head slightly to listen when Willie or one of the others would spout on some tremendous happening of the day. Those were the days of the great words. Fine, big words about Elizabethan literature, the principles of engineering and the Karl Marx theory. Words of won-



drous length. Sid would sit there with his neck bent toward the talker and listen.

"How is this business?" Sid asked me that first night when we were alone in the kitchen. "Is this college life worth it?"

"It is if you like it," I answered.

"You like it?"

I told Sid I liked it very much. Sid sat there awhile thinking, not saying anything. Then he nodded to himself as if he'd settled a question that had bothered him.

"DAN, I couldn't come to college now if I wanted to. We need money pretty bad where I live. But I'd like to come up here once in a while and maybe learn a little. I know I don't fit in so well, but this is my only way to find out." Sid paused and then fumbled on: "To find out about this kind of life."

I told Sid it was fine with me. So he became a regular member of our Friday night poker games. He was a competent, close-mouthed, near-the-vest player, showing no cutthroat tendencies. He filled in nicely.

"What's the matter with that Sid fellow?" Willie asked me one night. "What's he do, anyway?"

I told Willie I didn't really know. For the first time I realized how little I knew about Sid. It had never seemed important.

"Well, why don't you smooth him up a bit?" Willie insisted. "At least see he gets a haircut. Blue Street or not, he's a queer one."

Willie started the needle act on Sid about the third time he came over. Everything that happened to Willie was important. He'd give Sid complicated descriptions of what had happened to him that day. Fluent, grandiose talk of the wonderful world at college.

"What kind of business are you in?" Willie asked.

"I'm up at the iron works. It's no picnic. Plenty of heavy lifting. But I won't be there long. I'll find something better."

"Well, tell me, Sid. What do you do for recreation?"

"Why, I don't do so much," Sid said in his halting way. "I play some cards at the Turf, down on Blue Street. Drink a little beer. Talk to my friends. Sometimes I walk down by the waterfront and look at the boats. That's about all. Not much of anything."

Willie gave Sid a long calculating look. "What you need, Sid, is an education. Join our college and see the world. Yes sir, this is certainly the place for bright young men like ourselves."

Sid scratched at his blond head. "I suppose you're right," he said slowly. "But the way I figure—" He looked up and saw that Willie was waiting patiently. "Like I figure, there's lots of smart guys going to school here." Sid spread his long fingers wide on the table. "Thousands of them. They all want to be lawyers or doctors or engineers. All good smart fellows—as smart as me, and maybe smarter. . . . You understand what I mean?"

Willie grinned at me over Sid's bent head. "Frankly, no," he said.

Sid looked helplessly at me. It was painful to listen to the inarticulate way he dragged out his words. But I wanted to hear.

"Well—like this," Sid continued. "Take a telephone book, for instance: You look under *lawyers*, and there's hundreds of names. All of them trying to make a living. Or take doctors. Or say, writers, like you want to be, Willie. There's so many of them. Maybe I'd be batting my head against a stone wall trying to beat you fellows."

Willie sadly shook his head. "You've forgotten something," he said in his mincing way. "A fellow would never get any place by your way of thinking. Mankind just wouldn't progress. That's obvious."

Sid studied his hands, a miserable half-smile on his face.

"It's a negative way of thinking, Sid. A quite disturbing philosophy, you know."

"Yes, I suppose so," Sid said. "But I couldn't begin to look like you fellows—act like you or dress like you."

"Funnier things have happened," Willie said soothingly.

"Maybe that's right," Sid said. "I guess you have to try at a thing before you're sure."

"That's it, Sid boy," Willie said. "You're beginning to get that old college spirit."

I LOOKED across the table at Willie. He was wearing a white shirt with extra long collars. They were hard to get. He had a correct blue tie with a tight knot that set his suit off perfectly. Willie looked good, all right. He grinned at me. "You've certainly been lost in thought, Danny. Thinking about that Sid fellow?"

I nodded my head.

"I often wonder why he hung around our bunch," Willie said. "Maybe it was the atmosphere. We did have a dandy group of fellows."

"Maybe that was it," I said. But I knew that wasn't it—or not all of it.

"He never did fit in very well, did he?" Willie said. "He just wasn't our kind. Remember that girl he brought up the night of the spring party. What was her name?"

"I think it was Marj," I said. . . .

Marj was the only girl I ever saw Sid with. I asked Sid if he could bring a girl for our last party before school let out. He said he'd try to make it.

Willie was beaming brightly that night. His date was straight from the upper crust. She'd just won some campus beauty contest, and she sparkled. I was with Ellen Maddox—a nice lovely big girl with pretty teeth and pretty hair. I was hopelessly in love with her for almost the entire spring quarter that year.

The party warmed up nicely. Nobody came drunk, and they all laughed and talked at the same time. I was in the kitchen breaking ice when I heard the front door open. Everything went quiet for a long moment. Then a girl's high giggle cut through the silence with a jarring slur. It was the way a nice girl might laugh when she heard a dirty joke. It stopped me cold. Then the babble of voices rose, and the party went on.

WILLIE came tiptoeing into the kitchen with one finger over his lips. "Danny," he whispered. "Brace yourself. Guess who's here all dolled up like a Christmas tree? And with a red-hot mamma."

I felt a big ball of pain in my stomach. I followed Willie into the front room. Sid was standing by the front door with the girl beside him. He looked helplessly around the room. He had the girl's coat awkwardly draped over his arm. The girl stared frankly at the coeds, who watched her with furtive, amused little smiles.

I asked them to come out in the kitchen and help with the drinks. I mixed them each a stiff shot. I'd never seen Sid drink much, but he was in there pitching that night.

Marj might have been pretty if she'd been given a chance. As it was, she missed by plenty. With the right clothes, she could have been classed as slim. In the dress she wore she was only skinny. You could almost see the marked-down price-tag trailing from the bright red cloth. The rouge crept too high on her cheeks. A red splash of lipstick accentuated a mouth that should have only been subdued. A flower, somewhat wilted by now, but bravely pinned into shape, waved in pathetic defiance from her shoulder. Her eyes darted quickly, following the conversation, desiring so very much to be part of the fun. Her eyes were nice.

It was Sid who demanded special attention that night. His hair was freshly cut. It must have taken a lot of hair oil to slick it down. It had started to spring out again and stuck up in little tufts around his head. He wore an ill-fitting greenish blue suit which had probably been in the family a long time. It was freshly pressed. Around his neck was a white scarf. No topcoat with it. Just the white scarf wrapped twice around his neck with the ends folded into his suit coat.

I asked him if he'd like to hang his scarf in the closet. He unwound it and gave it to me. He patted at his throat.

"That's a nice tie," I said. It was the first time I'd ever seen him with a tie.

"It was my brother's," he said simply.

Sid and Marj mixed around as best they could. Everyone was concentrating on getting tight. They started breaking into couples. Sometime during the evening Ellen drew me aside and sadly shook her nicely modeled head. "After all, Dan, they don't really fit into this kind of party. You can keep your friends for your poker parties if you wish—but this is going a bit too far, don't you think?"

"I suppose you're right," I said. I felt miserable.

It was probably two in the morning when I noticed Willie's date was cozily engaged with a drama student. Willie was gone. And so was Marj. Sid had passed out in the kitchen. I had another drink.

The radio was playing the newly popular "Deep Purple." Someone in the corner was crooning the words softly. Then the front door was thrown open with intrusive violence. Marj staggered in the doorway, patting at her dress with fluttering hands.

"Sid," she cried. "Take me home, Sid."

Sid must have heard her right away. He was in the front room fast. Then Marj broke down. She flung her arms around Sid's neck and sobbed wildly. Sid held her helplessly.

"What kind of person does he think I am, Sid?" she whispered brokenly. The words carried easily to the corners of the room. "I'm just as good as the other girls, aren't I? You tell him that, Sid."

"Sure, Marj. Sure you are," Sid said softly. He patted Marj on the back. Willie was standing at the door, a tight grin on his face.

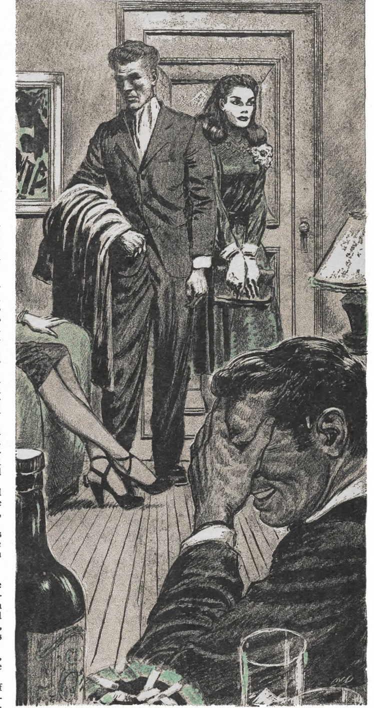
"What's he mean putting his hands on me like he did, Sid? Who's he think he is? I came with you. You tell him that."

SID walked over to Willie. He put his long fingers on Willie's shoulder, then ran his hand lightly down the front of Willie's shirt. He brushed at an imaginary spot on Willie's tie, the way a valet might do it. Sid's mouth trembled ever so slightly.

"Willie didn't mean any harm, Marj. Did you, Willie?" Sid's voice was a soft sing-song chant.

Willie laughed nervously. "Of course not, Sid. I didn't mean anything. I was just drinking. You know how it is."

"Sure, Willie, we know how it is. Don't we, Marj?" The girl nodded dumbly at Sid, her big round eyes



"Danny," Willie had whispered to me, "guess who's here all dolled up like a Christmas tree. And with a red-hot mamma."

Illustrated by John McDermott



"You're liable to get the wrong guy in your game. . . . And then— You see how it is, don't you?"

fastened on his lips as he talked. Sid took Marj by the arm. "Let's go," he said. I got her coat and Sid laid it around her shoulders.

"Marj has to get home now," he explained. "She has to work early tomorrow. We wish we could stay. We enjoyed it swell. Thanks for the whisky. Thanks a lot."

Marj nodded up at Sid. I saw them to the door. Sid stumbled slightly going down the stairs. He held onto Marj tight with one arm. They turned left, and started walking south toward Blue Street.

I came back in and tried to get drunk. The whisky had turned bitter. I decided to forget the booze. I chased everyone out then, and tumbled into bed. Willie had sprawled on the couch. It must have been six o'clock when a loud banging finally forced itself on my whirling head. I went to the door. It was Sid.

He grinned stupidly at me, his hands deep in his pockets. His face was flushed, as if he'd been running hard. He asked for a drink. I told him we'd killed it all, which was a lie. I made some coffee.

"It was good for a laugh, wasn't it, Dan?" He sounded as if he was talking to himself. I nodded. If he wanted to talk, I'd let him.

"Willie shouldn't have tried to fool around." Sid shook his head slowly. "Marj is a good girl. It wasn't nice of Willie to fool around like he did. I didn't like to see her hurt like that."

Sid stood swaying, one hand braced on the kitchen chair. He held up his other hand and spread his thumb and forefinger slightly apart.

"Look at this, Dan. See this." Sid extended his arm toward me. "I just miss. Just barely. Just that much. But I had to find out for sure. You understand. And now I know. Danny —I could have been a helluva guy!"

Then Sid sat down and put his head in his arms and in a few minutes was snoring loudly. I went to bed then, and when I woke up that afternoon Sid was gone.

"I DON'T suppose you forgot the last time we saw Sid, do you, Dan?" Willie Coulter's face was twisted in a good-natured smile. "Wasn't that a funny thing? Still, it should have been obvious enough. Here we'd been playing poker with him so many times and never caught on. Remember, Danny?"

"Let's have another drink, Willie," I said. . . .

It was easy to sit there looking at Willie and mentally recall the last time I had seen Sid March. It was the fall of 1942, and some of the gang had already gone. The rest of us knew it wouldn't be long. All the parties were pitched high with a tense gayety those days.

I called Sid and asked him if he'd like to come up for a poker game. He didn't sound enthusiastic. "It might be the last one," I explained. "Last time you'll see the gang."

"I'll come," Sid said. "But no holds are barred, Danny. Anything goes. I want you to know that."

I didn't know what he was talking about. I laughed, and told him to hurry over.

All the boys had their summer pay. With the Government soon to handle the freight, money was loose. Before long most of the bunch had written checks. It was fast action. These players had sat in a lot of poker games. They knew the game from every intelligent angle. They'd played together dozens of times and knew each others' habits and systems. It was tough sledding with this bunch. But

what happened that night was an amazing thing to watch.

Sid came in late and moved in quietly. He played along about even the first half-hour, not saying anything. Then, fifteen minutes later he he had most of the red chips stacked in front of him. A few more hands, and he had the blue chips. Then came the bills. And then the checks. Three of us had to drop out. We'd lost ours for the night. Sid sat in there loose as a goose. He couldn't do a thing wrong. He was hot. The boys couldn't beat him.

THE last hand of the game came suddenly. The four players left all had betting cards. They chunked it in solid—chips, checks, bills, everything. All piled in a powerful stack in the middle of the table.

Wolf Hogan laid down three big kings. Charley LaMay had a nine-high flush. Then Willie put down three jacks and a pair of tens. A nice juicy full-house. Then they all looked at Sid. He took his time about it. He shoved a few chips out of the way. He laid down the 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of hearts: a straight flush! That was the poker game.

Sid stacked the chips in nice even red, white and blue piles. He placed the checks in a neat stack. The same with the green bills. Then he reached across the table for the cards. He shuffled them easily between his long fingers.

The boys sat watching him.

"You guys should be more careful," Sid said. He was talking in a soft, soothing voice. "A smart guy might find this game an easy touch." Sid's hands were working endlessly, shuffling the cards with a continuous noiseless riffle.

"A smart guy could mark this whole deck in a half-hour." Sid paused, holding the deck loosely in front of him. "He could recognize every card in the deck, just by looking at the back." Sid tapped the top card. "Like the queen of spades." He flipped the card across the table to Willie. It slid up against his arm. The queen of spades.

"Or the seven of hearts, the jack of spades, or the ace of clubs." Sid rattled off the cards before turning them up. He flipped them rapidly. He called them all. The boys looked at him, wide-eyed.

Sid stopped then and held up the ace of diamonds. He showed it around the table. Then he placed it back on top of the deck. "Suppose a smart guy could read the backs of the cards. And say he wanted this ace of diamonds. What would he do?" Sid stared with a quizzical expression. No one answered. They waited.

"He'd deal the cards like this," Sid said. His hands whipped the cards incredibly fast around the table. He paused as he was ready to deal himself. He slowly turned the card over. The ace of diamonds. "You see," Sid continued softly, "it only looked as if I was dealing the top card. But appearances are deceiving, aren't they? Actually, I was dealing the second card. Dealing seconds, they call it down on Blue Street. It allows you to save the top card for yourself. An elementary trick. One you should learn early. If you don't—" Sid twisted his face sadly. "Why, then you're liable to get the wrong guy in your game. . . . And then—" Sid passed one hand over the top of the chips. "You see how it is, don't you?"

RISING to his feet, Sid looked around the table. Then he reached down, and giving one wide sweep with the flat of his hand, he knocked the chips and the bills and the checks across the table and onto the floor. He was breathing hard, and a cord in his neck stood out in a white line. He turned quickly and walked into the kitchen.

The boys didn't say anything. They were sitting there tight. I went into the kitchen. Sid was standing by the table, nervously running his hand through his hair.



"What's the angle, boy?" The smile was still plastered on Willie's face. "What's in this for you?"

"You want me to go, Dan?"

"I asked you to come, Sid."

"Sure you did, Dan. But I think I better go." He picked up his trench-coat and pulled it on tight around his shoulders. He went out through the front room without looking around. He turned at the door.

"Be careful, you guys," he said. That was all. He opened the door, and then was gone.

Well, it wasn't long after this, that most of the boys were in the war. Willie went to a Navy Officers' school. Someone wrote me that Sid was in the Parachute Troops. I kept my own date with the Army. Month stretched after month. Only a few memories of the ones at home.

And then you were back, and everyone seemed the same. Still the same nice bunch. There was only Sid. I wanted to find out about him . . . .

Willie was waving his glass in time with the music blaring from the juke-box.

"I'd like to see him, Willie," I said.

"Who? Sid, you mean? Where do you think he might be?"

"I don't know," I said. "But it might not be too hard to find out. Let's go."

"Why, sure, Dan, if you really want to."

We climbed into Willie's new car and drove south across town. "You know, Dan," Willie said easily, "I never worried about you. It was obvious you'd come out all right. But Sid—though I never did like the fellow, I found myself wondering ever so often how he'd make out. It was quite disturbing. You know what I mean?"

"Yes," I answered. "I know what you mean."

We hit Blue Street, turned left two blocks, made a wide U turn and pulled up in front of the Turf. We went in through the swinging doors. It was as I remembered it. The years hadn't disturbed a thing. It even seemed natural to see old Al, his chair tipped against the wall, snoring peacefully.

I shook his shoulder, and he squeezed his eyes open. He squinted a moment, then tipped his chair forward. He stuck a hand gingerly in my stomach.

"Don't go soft, lad," he said. "Can't beat a man 'less you're in tiptop shape. Gans used to tell me that. . . . Remember what I tell you, now."

"Sure, Al," I said. "I'll remember."

Willie looked at me with a silly grin. "Characters, characters," he chuckled. "Now how about finding Sid, hey, Danny?"

Al's vacant eyes lit up. "Sid? You looking for Sid?"

"We haven't seen him since the war," I explained. "We were wondering what happened to him."

Al struggled to his feet. "Well now, I thought everybody knew about Sid. You lads follow me. I'll show you where he is."

Al shuffled between the tables and started for the door. Willie looked at me and shrugged. We followed Al north on Blue Street, up to the public park, across the football field and into the field-house. There, in the middle of the basketball court, with maybe a hundred kids clamoring about him, was Sid March.

He looked all right. His face had filled out. He still had his head of tousled blond hair. He was the same Sid I remembered, only it was like seeing him for the first time.

"What's he doing?" Willie asked brightly.

Al looked scornfully over his shoulder. "What's he doing? Just got the biggest job on Blue Street, that's all. Sid, he's our park instructor. Best we ever had. Handles every kid on the street. That's something, Mister."

Sid looked up and saw us. He nodded and smiled. It took him a few minutes to line the kids on teams. Then he came over and shook hands. He seemed glad to see us.

"I ran into Willie tonight and got talking about you," I said. "Just wondered how everything was."

"Everything's fine," Sid said. "Remember Marj? We were married just before I went overseas." Sid made little steplike motions with his hand. "A family man now, Dan."

"And how do you like handling these kids?" I asked.

"I don't know just how to describe it," Sid said. "It's—it's—well—it's satisfying."

Al pulled excitedly on Sid's arm. "Tell 'em about your champion Golden Glovers. And about that scholarship deal for your good boys. And about the new field-house. Tell 'em that, now, lad."

Sid slapped Al on the shoulder. "We'll have that field-house next year at this time," he said. "No fooling, Dan, these Blue Street people are really chipping in. Can't you just see it! One of those brick layouts. . . . Use it for an auditorium, too. Full-size basketball courts, plenty of seats, modern shower-rooms—everything a kid would need. How's that sound now, hey?" Sid was pounding one fist into his other hand. He was all filled up with the thought of it.

Willie chuckled. He looked at Sid with a half-smile curling his lips.

"Tell me, Sid. What's the angle, boy? Where do you fit in?"

Sid stiffened, his hands swinging in big knots. A muscle jumped crazily along his jaw.

"The angle?" Sid's voice was barely a whisper. "What do you mean, the angle?"

The smile was still plastered on Willie's face. "You know what I mean, Sid." He waved his hand vaguely at the kids. "What's in this for you?"

Sid took a deep breath of air. He ran his hand once through his hair. His face was chalk-white. He leaned forward. I thought for a moment he was going to hit Willie in the face. Then he drew his lips back over his teeth and smiled.

"I'd like to answer you, Willie." His voice broke slightly as he tried to keep it level. "But I don't think you'd understand."

Everything seemed to stand death still for a moment. Willie's mouth was still creased, but his eyes looked sick. Then the strident shouting of a quarreling group crashed across the gym. Sid let the air out slowly between his teeth. He wiped at a line of sweat which had formed along his upper lip.

"Guess I better get back to work," he said. "Say hello to any of your old gang for me . . . I'm here every day—drop down just any time." He nodded his head once quickly, then turned and trotted across the floor. The last sight I had of Sid March was his blond head and serious face standing out over a circle of howling kids.

We walked back to the Turf in silence. At the door Al scuffed his shoes and mumbled a few swear-words under his breath. Then he stepped close and poked his finger methodically against Willie's chest.

"You don't see so good, do you, Mister?"

Willie stared at old Al. He wet his lips nervously with his tongue, coughed as if to answer, then clamped his mouth tight shut.

"No, you don't see good at all," Al repeated, punctuating each word with a poke at Willie. "If you did, you wouldn't talk like that to Sid." Al shook his head sadly. "Only a fool would say that to a gentleman."

Willie's mouth sagged open, pulling his skin in deep folds. He'd been hit where it hurt. He stood a long time without moving. Then he swung around and walked to his car.

We drove two blocks up Blue Street with Willie staring fixedly ahead. "Dan," he said finally, "the old man is right, you know. . . . As right as right can be!" I was chilled to my socks by the way he said it. There was complete humility in his voice.

"Willie," I said, "we never had to worry about Sid. Not really. He's a helluva guy."

"I know," said Willie. "It was obvious all the time."

We turned north and headed uptown.

Of the Island of ZIPANGU: and the Great Khan's attack against it...

From "The Book of Ser Marco Polo concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the *East*." Here all illuminated by Peter Wells, another old attacker of *Japan*.

So great was the wealth of this island, that a desire was excited in the breaste of the Great Khan Kublai, now reigning, to make the conquest of it and to annex it to his domminions. In order to effect this hee fitted out a numerous fleete and embarked a large body of troops, under the command of two of his principall officers.... The expedition sailed from the portes of Zai-tun and Kin-sai, and crossing the intermediate sea reached the Island in safety. A jealousy, however, arose betwixt the two Commanders, one of whom treated the plans of the other with contempt and resisted the execution of his orders. Because of this they were unable to gain possession of any citie or fortified place, with the exception of one only, which was carried by assault, the garrison having refused to surrender... It happened after some time, that a North wind began to blow with great force, and the ships of the Tartars, which lay near the shore of the Island, were driven foul of each other...a number of the vessells foundered. ...These events tooke place in the course of the yeere 1279. The Great Khan having learned some yeeres after that the unfortunate issue of the expedition was to be attributed to the dissention betwixt the two commanders, caused the head of one of them to be cut off. The other hee sent to the sauvage Island of Zorza, where it is the custom to execute criminalls in the following manner: They are wrapped round both arms, in the hide of a buffalo fresh taken from the beaste, which is sewed tight. As this dries it compresses the bodie to such a degree that the sufferer is uncapable of moving, or in any manner helping himselfe, and thus miserably perishes.



The Minos Goes to

A SEPTEMBER storm in 1933 B.C. was exactly what it is in 1948 A.D., for nature changes but little over the centuries. The sea was choppy still, and some of the rowers still sick from the effects of the violent blow. But the Mediterranean sky was its usual brilliant blue again, save for the wind-ripped clouds scudding away to the eastward under the impetus of the still brisk breeze.

Druas, Twenty-fifth Minos of Crete, had to shade his eyes with his hand as he looked about for the other ships of his punitive fleet. Piracy had been growing in the Mid-earth sea; and the Empire could not tolerate this impudence, or its effects.

Storm-scattered, the other five war-galleys had disappeared. Probably, like the *Ishbel*, they had taken shelter in the lee of some convenient island, or might even have come to grief on its shoals and ledges. If they were safe, they were doubtless storm-damaged, and would be slow in resuming their course toward Crete.

There was a sail to the southward; and as the lookout called, Druas looked to see two craft against the blinding sunlight. By the rakish build of them, they were never merchantmen. No warcraft sailed the seas but those of Crete; for this was the earliest European empire of them all. But pirate craft there were, even then, preying on the fat merchantmen that ranged from Crete to Britain, and southward to the tip of Africa. Always a nuisance, their presence had begun to rankle now, until the Minos himself put out after them in command of his war fleet.

"Overtake them!" ordered Druas. There was nothing to lose if the craft were friendly; there might be gain if they were enemies.

"Gnaphtor! Quicken the beat!" The captain's orders were snapped out with quick and wise authority.



Battle

AMERICAN CANDIDATES MAY BE GLAD WE HAVE OUTGROWN ANCIENT IDEAS. . . . THE CRETANS, FOR EXAMPLE, CHOSE THEIR RULER TO SERVE NINE YEARS, THEN SENT HIM TO JOIN THE SPIRIT COUNCIL—THAT IS, HE WAS KINDLY AND PIOUSLY PUT TO DEATH.

by KENNETH CASSENS

The click of the hammers on the wood-blocks increased in tempo, and the slaves bent to their oars. Whip in hand, a crewman walked between the benches, and even the most sea-sick of the rowers tried to give evidence of laboring at their utmost strength at the endless task.

"Trim sails! Helmsman, watch your course!"

THE galley bucked and shuddered, and spray came over the high bow into the lower waist as she quartered into the boiling waves of the tossing Mediterranean. But she surged away on the new course, steadily closing the distance that separated them from the ships she was pursuing.

"Pirates, all right." Parnikleas, the Captain, was grim-faced. His dark and weathered skin, seamy from years in command of the Cretan war fleet, bore traces of salt on it still from the storm-dashed brine that had been flung into it.

"And they outnumber us, I'll wager." He hitched his sword-belt in a suggestive motion. "Minos, liege lord, should we risk this fight with your august presence on the ship? We are alone, remember."

Druas snugged his own sword-belt to his hips. He loosed his weapon, a short, triangular-bladed stabbing sword of beaten bronze. His mind was sick at the thought of what lay ahead at Knossos; not so much at what was going to happen to him, as because of the way Kallathu was taking it.

"Let drive, Parnikleas. We'll fight."

Two days. Two bitter days, and then Druas would join the Illustrious Council of the Kings. The Council of the Twenty-four, he reflected bitterly, would soon be the Council of the Twenty-five. And he would make up the number to its good roundness. For it was decreed by



custom and immutable law, that he who ruled as Minos for nine years, must be "promoted" at the end of that time to the realm of shadows, whence he still would protect his kingdom. By his fresh presence in the Spirit Council, he could thus help to make the rule of Phædron, his already chosen successor, even more beneficent and profitable to Crete than his own reign had been.

But enough of thought; for thought was painful now.

"We're gaining, Parnikleas. Can the rowers stand another spurt?"

"Perhaps. But we should save a reserve of their strength for the battle. Forgive my presumption, Minos."

"We'll make it at the present beat. They're pirate craft, all right; see them ready their arms."

Soldiers on the *Ishbel*, the tough Cretan equivalent of marines, snugged their armor to them and checked swords and daggers. The archers strung their bows, and made sure of full supplies of arrows in every gaudy quiver. In a matter of half an hour, they would be in bowshot range.

Druas almost quivered with the will to drive the war craft on. He wished his eagerness might in some way give an extra surge of speed to the galley. Click, pull! Clock, return! If only Gnaphtor could feel Druas' excitement, he'd quicken the beat without knowing it! *Click, clock! Click—*

The enemy was sure their race was a losing one now, and it looked as if they might put about for battle. Druas was leaning forward eagerly. This might prove the glorious end to his good reign: to die in battle, and not, like a bleating sheep, to submit to the priest's knife. To die here on the pleasant wind-swept sea, not in front of the Cave of the Kings on Ida's rugged heights.

A bowman drew his longest, heaviest arrow to its limit and let fly. The shot was true, but the swing of the pirate vessel as she put about, combined with a gust of wind, carried the singing missile harmlessly into a bulwark. But the enemy was sure now that battle must be joined, even if this were a war galley, and not a fat-bellied sluggish merchant ship.

More arrows flew from the stout bows of the Cretan archers, as famous in the ancient world as the archers of another island empire would later become. The ramming beak at the forefoot of the *Ishbel* crashed into the forward quarter of the nearest pirate, under the full surge of the oars.

"Up oars!" The click of the blocks ceased.

A slave screamed as his oar was swept into his middle at the impact, and he was ripped from his manacles by the blow. Soldiers quickly flung the unfortunate man overboard, and leaped for the bow and battle.

DRUAS vaulted over the bulwark at the bow to the deck of the pirate galley. The other boat had come about by now, and was surging to ram the *Ishbel*.

But the Cretan archers were not there merely for display. A whistling flight of arrows clouded the air between the vessels, and the bowstrings twanged again before they reached their mark. Men dropped in the enemy craft, and she fell away sluggishly, fighters and slaves alike falling over their weapons and their oars.

Men were running toward Druas from both ships; and he warded a blow with his shield of wood and leather, even as men leaped lightly to his side from his own ship. The crewmen of the *Ishbel* were making fast with grappling hooks—made, like the weapons, from bronze tempered by much beating. The action was furious; and Druas felt a raking pain along his ribs as a half-parried stroke came too close home. But in a moment he had drawn his own blade from the man's heart, and was defending himself from another of the pirate crew.

The decks quivered, and the Minos knew the other ship, despite the arrows, had engaged the *Ishbel*. A turmoil of shouts and cries came to his ears in the confused, confusing medley of battle sounds. An arrow pierced the throat of the man before him, and he leaped forward on the deck, now slippery with blood, to engage another.

This adversary was a tough, skillful, experienced, hardened swordsman. Druas fought as for his life, even as he wondered if this might not be the moment of his own fall. He rather welcomed the idea; this was the time and way to die! But trained and bred gymnast and warrior that he was, he could not hold back his own skill to bring that desired end.

The pirate was swinging more wildly now, in saber-fighting style. Druas clung to the straightforward stabbing attack, and warding off the other fellow's swing with his shield, gouged upward under the pirate's buckler. The fellow slipped on a gout of someone else's blood, and in a moment his own was flowing on the deck.

Druas stepped back, ready to receive or parry another blow; but the short and bloody battle was at an end. Not a man of either pirate ship but bore a wound, and less than half of them were left alive. Scarcely a man aboard the *Ishbel* was untouched; for even the archers had joined in the hand-to-hand fighting before the battle was done. Five of the crew of nine were dead, and a full dozen of the forty soldiers.

Those left alive, made fierce by battle, glared at the pirates who remained alive. Arrows on ready bowstrings, the archers were ready to carry out orders for their execution.

"Hold!" cried Druas. "Beach the ships, and we'll 'tend to these rascals on the shore. We'll inspect the cargoes then, and damage to the ships as well."

An island loomed nearby, the island for which the pirate craft appeared to have been making. Lovely against the blue of the quieting sea, it was one of the multitude of uninhabited islets that form a bridge of stepping-stones from Hellas to Crete, from Crete to Asia Minor. The ships were beached without trouble, and the dejected pirate crew driven ashore under the hard gaze of the watchful archers. They had arrows left, and the will to use them.

The slaves of both the pirate craft were released from their manacles and brought ashore, all that remained alive of them. Some of them, Cretans, were jubilant at release. Others, blond

Hellenes or almost black Egyptians, the Misrayim, as they called themselves, were less sure. This might be merely the exchange of one hard master for another; one hard bench for a harder one.

"Who are your officers?" asked Druas of the pirate crew.

One man stepped forward. The Minos signaled quickly to the captain of the soldiers, and he stepped forward to the prisoner. A quick slash of the bronze sword, and the disemboweled man fell gasping to the sand.

"Any more officers left alive?" queried Druas sternly.

There were mutterings among the pirates. No man stepped forward.

"You slaves! Any gentlemen of quality among you?"

A gaunt and swarthy Cretan, the marks of many scourgings on his back, stepped forward.

"I was a merchant-adventurer, engaged in the British trade for furs and tin."

"I am a priest of the Serpent-goddess," said another.

"A priest! Whisper the sacred name of the goddess to me, that I may be assured!" said Druas.

"No foreigner may hear that name," the priest reminded the Minos. "Britomart!" he whispered.

"Every deference to him! He is indeed a priest!"

The priest was quickly robed, and found articles of his trade thrust into his hand by fellow-priests from the *Ishbel*.

Druas questioned the trader.

"Can you identify any of these men as officers of the ship you were enslaved on?"

"That one, with the scar across his cheek, laid a whip over my back many a time. And that one—"

"Just one, for now. Soldiers, that man with the scar and the bloody arm. Peg him out on the sands, and flay him."

The pirate was immediately tied to four pegs, quickly driven in the packed sand. Men held his struggling body as a soldier brought a keen blade across his shoulders and down each side, and stripped away the quivering skin. He cut the sheet of bloody tissue away at the buttocks, and began to strip the wrenching arms.

"Let be," said Druas. "Now, are there any more officers among you?"

There was an exchange of looks, and a muttered word or two. To confess was to be disemboweled; to be pointed out, was to be flayed. Of the two, the former death was quicker.

Five men stepped forward.

"Fetch a log of driftwood," commanded the Minos. "Place them back to back and bind them to it."

Three on one side of the log, two on the other, their arms were hooked about the log and they were securely bound to it. Druas stepped over to look at the crew. An unprepossessing lot they were; some reeling from wine, and all from loss of blood. A few good men for the rowers' benches among them, though. . . .

One boy returned his gaze steadily and directly. He was about seventeen.

"You, boy. Where is the harbor you conceal your plunder in?"

"I'll never tell!" he raged.

"Soldiers, stake him out."

The lad was bound to four pegs, beside the first victim of the flayer's knife. The other man was drawing his body up in sharp, convulsive struggles, almost pulling the pegs from the bloody sand.

"Now, boy, where is your headquarters?"

"Poseidon swallow thee and thy empire! I'll never tell!"

"Kludon, the knife."

Crimson spurted from the line across his shoulders and the cuts down his heaving sides.

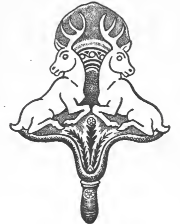
"Will you tell now?"

"Never!" the boy screamed.

"He's a brave lad," said the Minos. "Release him. He's not really hurt yet; Kludon never cuts deeply for a flaying.

"Now, by the sea gods, boy, you listen: you know well where your evil tribe is hidden on these shores. We will let you go, that you may carry back the news of what happens to pirates when the Cretans take their ships. See that they hear it all. Moreover, this is just a sample; for we will harry you, man and woman and child, if these attacks on Cretan ships do not come to an end."

The soldiers untied the boy, and let go of his arms at a gesture from the Minos. Like an antelope the youth flashed across the beach and into the woods. Arrows thudded into the sands about his heels, the archers deliberately making near misses to goad him on. From the shelter of the woods, the boy watched the remainder of the brief drama.





The damaged ship was left behind, its cargo transferred to the less-damaged pirate craft. The huskier members of the pirate crews were chained to the oars, and a squad of archers put in charge of the ship to bring her to port at Cæratus. Then the *Ishbel* and the enemy boat pushed off. The officers, still bound to the log, were on her foredeck, as were the remainder of the crew of freebooters.

"Fling them over!" called Druas to Parnikleas.

The officers were tossed into the water, still bound to their log.

"Archers!" The bows grew taut. "Try your skill!"

The strings hummed, and the water grew bloody.

Then, one by one, the pirates not chosen for galley slaves were tossed into the waters, to become targets of the Cretan bowmen. One man swam under water for many yards, but a shaft took him in the back when he was compelled to surface. Others sank at once, like stones; others were permitted to swim to extreme range before being dispatched by the expert bowmen. . . .

The battle frenzy passed from him, Druas looked forward again to the cloud-capped peaks of Crete, looming above the horizon. The summit of Mount Ida drew his gaze. It was there that, in accordance with law and custom, he must shortly die.

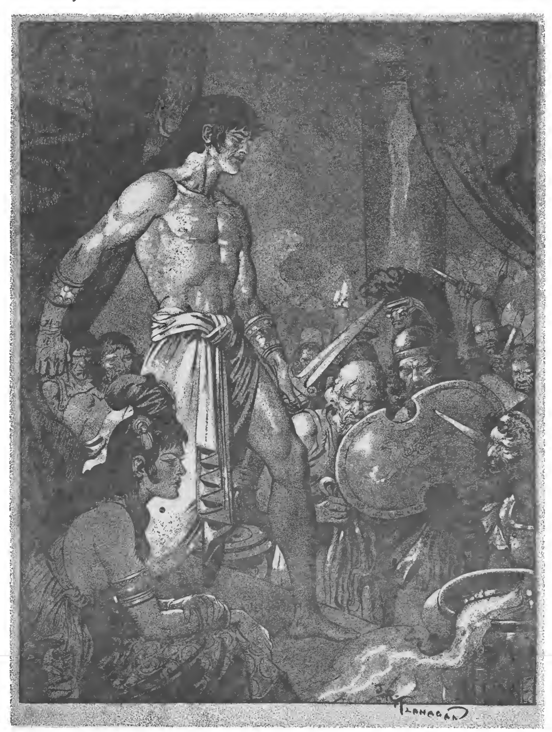
Two days! Two days, after the nine years of pomp and power and splendor! Two days; then the bronze blade of the arch-priest would slit his gullet as if he were a temple sheep. Then he would join the Illustrious Council of his predecessors—a glorious thing, to hear the priests tell of it. But a man wonders, just the same, when the thing draws so inevitably close.

The *Ishbel* and her trailing captive consort drew to port. At sight of the flagship with the Minos in her bow, a great shout rose from the crowded docks.

"Hail, Minos! Hail, ever victorious! Minos, ruler of earth and sea, hail, Minos, hail!"

But there were no shouts of "Live the Minos!" now; for the crowd, like Druas himself, realized that the autumnal equinox was on them; and that on that appointed day his tenure of the throne, and of this life as well, must end. The plaudits were pleasant to the ruler's ears, however; the more poignantly sweet because of the very nearness of the end.

Illustrated by JOHN RICHARD FLANAGAN



"Alkmenon, these men are not to be harmed. They sought but to deliver me from tomorrow's death. Let them go."

Long shadows fell across the pleasant avenues of Knossos as Druas and his retinue of soldiers and officials mounted the long hill. At sunset Knossos seemed to reach its apex of beauty. The glowing paintings on the wall seemed to capture and hold the fading light; the statuettes of silver and gold displayed in niches on the outer wall flashed in the leveling rays. There was no fear of thievery here; this city was so rich and beautiful that none had need to steal!

The streets were clean; a cleanliness that was the marvel of the ancient world. For instead of being the reeking surface conduits of the garbage and sewerage of the city that the streets of other cities of that and later eras were, and were to be, these were paved and pleasant ways. The city's waste was conveyed to sewers continually flushed by the Cæratus River; and their noxious vapors released, if ever, far out on the surrounding sea. Not for many millennia to come was the Cretan concept of sanitation to become effective, even in the highly civilized cities of Greece and Rome.

There was no surprise expressed at seeing the ruler of the empire ascending the hill on foot. No sedan chair was here for the Minos; the Cretan folk of that early age were worshipers of bodily fitness. The luxurious laziness of Oriental potentates was a thing to spurn and to despise. They were fit, every last one of them; and their ruler must be most fit, physically and mentally, of them all.

This may have been the underlying reason for the ending in death of the nine-year reign of their rulers. No Minos must ever undergo the experience of decline and defeat at the hands of age-bringing time.

So, when each successive Minos reached the end of his nine-year reign, he was killed. There was every mark of respect, indeed almost worship, in the killing. That in all probability seventy or more men endured this sort of death over a period of more than six hundred years is evidence of its complete acceptance by the Minos and his people. Oddly, when the custom was at last breached, the empire was on its way to decline, collapse and its final fall. What man can argue, these millennia later, the right or wrong of it? Whether it seems kind or cruel to us is of little importance beside its meaning to these children of an early age in the spotted history of earth.

The Minos and his retinue reached the palace wall, and neared the entrance to the great labyrinth, the maze of interlocking passages that led, if followed rightly, to the arena center.

Druas was lost in memories. At the age of sixteen, he and Kallathu had first stepped within its dark enfolding walls, its bewildering complexity of interlacing passageways. He remembered how they had defeated its baffling immensity by skill and knowledge. He remembered the quick tug of Kallathu's hand.

"Druas," the girl had said, "it's dark here, awfully dark. But take my hand; we'll face it and we'll conquer it together."

They had won through. They had conquered in the Bull Dance too; that vernal exuberant game of spring, when the skill and wits of man found mastery over the brutal force of unchained nature, personified in the bull, the Minotaur.

Together, they had faced the maze. Together with Theognis and Lychomile they'd faced the Moon-bull; and though the other pair had met death, they had triumphed in the dance.

Then, five and a half years later, the invitation had come from the council, the invitation to Druas to take the supreme position in the nation, that of the Minos: Druas, a commoner; Druas, a country boy; Druas, Minos of the greatest and only empire the European world then knew!

"Druas," his wife had warned him, "it is the supreme honor, the greatest the nation can afford, I know. But it means death in the end. Bitter, submissive death."

"Some of the kings have died in battle," Druas reminded her. "Each Minos goes to battle in the last three months of his reign, if not before. Some have joined the Illustrious Council in that way."

"Battle or priest's knife, husband of mine, it's death."

"Kallathu, it is for the good of Crete. Besides, nine years is a long, long time. You don't think I'd make an unwise ruler?"

"Never, Druas. You're too true and fine for that. In any event, it's your star. Accept the honor if you must, and take my hand in yours. As we did the maze and the Bull, we'll face this thing together!"

So they had gone to the great palace. Little Druas, three years old then, had never remembered any life but that of a prince of the realm. Nor, orphaned, would he know any bitterness; for he would be an honored ward of the state, and a prince of the realm until his own death, whether death came naturally or in battle. Honor and deference would be paid to him and his family, as now it was paid to the children of former kings. Ellen and Ariadne likewise, born after his elevation to the throne, would be princesses for all their lifetime—not to rule, for the throne was not hereditary, but still as leaders of the State.

They passed the entrance to the maze, and rounded the corner of the great pile of masonry to reach the entrance to the palace. It was a splendidly ornamented opening; not garish, like the palaces of the Orient, but with a chaste beauty of line and ornamentation that was restrained yet complete. Color and line and surface texture were smoothly blended in a palace that must have been the satisfaction of its unknown architect, the pride and splendor of the populace of the island empire. Burned at a later period, it was restored to greater glory by Daedalus, one of the masters of thought and design of the ancient world; but even in this early age, it had splendor that entitled it to rank among the world's wonders, had not men forgotten it by the time they were ready to compile a list of marvels.

The palace halls were cool, despite the warmth of the September day. In the hush of twilight, they were filled with perfume from the flowers within the courts. Bird-songs sped the sun from sight as Druas sought the throne.

THE throne was of simple shape, a bench of marble, carved in bas-relief. Painted lions couched on the walls at the back and on the side. Druas simply and thoughtfully dispensed justice in the few cases waiting his presence; the empire was well organized, and few disputes needed to be appealed to the throne. These were petitioners referred to him from the council; and their pleas were already well briefed.

In less than a half hour he rose from the throne and dismissed the assemblage. Flames from olive-oil lamps lighted his way along the gayly decorated corridors. This was his last audience, Druas reflected. Kallathu had not appeared; this was fitting, for he should come to her, not she to him.

As he reached their living-quarters, twelve-year-old young Druas greeted him. He smiled at the sturdy lad, dark of eyes and hair, with a sparkle in his eyes that even the present grief could scarcely hide.

"Dad, Mother thinks you may not have to die tomorrow."

"Why? It is for the good of Crete, and ordained of her gods, that I should die."

"Then why does Mother oppose it?"

"Her love for me overshadows her judgment."

The two passed in to the beautifully decorated palace apartments. The walls were covered with lively frescoes, executed by artists who could rank with the best of any age. Games and festivals were pictured, boxing and wrestling matches, sports like hunting and fishing, contests of archery; all the vivid life of the city about them. Pride of Druas and Kallathu and their children alike was the fresco that pictured their own triumph in the Bull Dance of years before.

"Kallathu!"

Kallathu came quickly from a nearby room, beautiful and fragrant in her varicolored dress. It was of gold and green and scarlet, as befitted one who had been a Herpetathea, the earthly representation of Britomart the Serpent-goddess. The sleeves were puffed out, and tied to her shoulders with ribbons. Her breasts were bare in the Cretan fashion; and the flounces of the garment spread about her feet. Her black hair glistened in the lamplight, and her face lifted for a kiss.

"Druas, my lord and love! It's good to see you home again!" There was a sudden shadow on her face.

"Kallathu, what is this young Druas was telling me? Are you encouraging the children to think I need not die?"

"Child, would you go and find the chamberlain and ask him to arrange for a different display of flowers tomorrow in the great hall? Thank you, dear. . . .

"Druas, you need not die. I cannot see any advantage at all to Crete in losing your mind and intelligence. Why can't you simply go to Ida as if to die, and then disguise yourself as a humble shepherd and live elsewhere? I'd go with you gladly, anywhere. This luxury, this palace—it will be empty and meaningless without you, my love and my life!"

"Kallathu, it is an impossible suggestion. I must die; the gods have so decreed. We have done much for Crete—would you have me risk defeat for our navies, reversal to our forces of empire? I must die, I tell you!"

Kallathu's arms were warm about him, her body clinging to his in fierce pain. A tremendous awareness of life was in him, now that life was so near to an end. A bird's last sleepy song from the outside was like a symphony, was melody and music expressed in a single note. The softly splashing fountain, the hurry of sandaled feet across the court outside, warmth, light, the scent of flowers—these pleasures all mounted to a peak of satisfied yet still outreaching senses that sought to draw all the world to him, tonight.

Tonight, all this. Tomorrow, the dark and unknown maze; the maze of death. Perhaps beyond, an ineffable glory; but that was something that no man could know.

Their lips met in a crushing kiss, regretful, lingering, poignant. Their arms fell apart, and Druas sighed. Kallathu looked sharply and searchingly at his face, then turned away. Druas did not follow; but he heard some sort of low-voiced colloquy outside. He turned to the room set apart for him and Kallathu for their sleeping. He was weary after the day of battle, before the crucial day to come.

THAT night, there seemed to be an unusual amount of bustle, of comings and goings in the palace. Druas, wakeful, was startled when a shadow materialized itself into Parnikleas, captain of the *Ishbel*. Kallathu stirred beside him, drawing the covers about her lovely body.

The officer's dark face was strained.

"Minos, liege lord! Waken, but be quiet! My men are spread throughout the palace; but we are not enough if the guard is aroused! Come with us to the *Ishbel*. Young Druas, Ellen, Ariadne—all your family is ready; the ship has provisions, water. Quickly, lord! Quickly, liege lady! We'll sail far, far away; perhaps to the farther shores of the outer sea, if farther shores there be!"

"Parnikleas! O friend, I know you did this for very love of me! But we cannot, must not do this thing. It is treason to Crete, treason to our gods! No, Parnikleas, no!"

The captain made a quick signal, and shadows leaped from the corners of the room, ropes in their hands. By force if needful, Druas should come!

"Guards! Guards!" cried Druas, and leaped from his bed for the wall.

His sword and target hung there, and his unexpected leap carried him to the weapons. Men flung themselves on him; but he fought them off. His heart was bitter. These men were his friends; but conscience was conscience. A strange battle, this: a man fighting those who wanted him to live, fighting for his death instead of his life! But this must be!

"Minos! You're mad!"

"Parnikleas, mad I may be," he panted. "But I will not destroy my nation by this impious thing—never, never!"

The wound in his side was opening again, and smarting as the sweat of battle dripped into it.

"Give way!" Parnikleas cried out. "We'd have to kill him to take him!"

A man lay dying on the floor, guards were hurrying in with weapons and with torches.

"Surround the traitors!" cried an officer. "What, Parnikleas—you?"

"In friendship, not in treachery," interposed Druas quickly. He stooped to the man on the floor. "Good friend, you gave your life in an attempt to save mine, for which I thank you. Wait for me in the realm of shadows."

He stood erect again.

"Alkmenon, these men are not to be harmed. They sought but to deliver me from tomorrow's death. Let them go; it is my command as Minos."

"Would, Minos, that you would command us to help them. All the guard would gladly take your place to save you from this death. But it is the law; and must be, I suppose."

"It is the law, and must be."

At Druas' order, the captain and crew of the *Ishbel* were permitted to go unharmed, hurt disappointment apparent in every dark face.

Kallathu, wild with grief and strain, hurled herself at her husband as soon as the room emptied.

"Druas, you fool, you folly-ridden idiot!" She beat on his naked chest with her clenched fists. "Oh, my liege lord! Forgive the words! But Druas, they wanted to give you your life! We could have sailed beyond the Pillars, out into the mists. If there is aught beyond, we might have reached the farthest shores of the Outer Sea! Oh, Druas, why did you resist? Why? Why?"

"Kallathu, love and life, one reason only: Crete."

"Crete is a cruel mistress, and will kill you this coming noon."

"Crete is lovely, true and adorable. And for love of country, I die for her gladly."

"No, Druas, no!"

"Kallathu, this is our last night. Must we quarrel the shadows away?"

Her face wet, Kallathu yielded to him with passion equal to their first love. But the blessed moments stole quickly away under the shadow of the strange and ugly dawn to come. . . .

That dawn arrived, and with it the assembling of the last council.

Sadly, in measured tones, Druas made his last speech, then with a ritual song ringing in his ears, solemnly handed the robe and scepter to Phædron, chosen to be the twenty-sixth Minos, who accepted them gravely.

Phædron's glance held jubilance; and Druas knew how long the nine years looked to him. To Phædron, looking forward, they must have seemed close to unending. To Druas, looking backward, they were scarcely days, not years.

There were haggard faces among the council: the reign of Druas, hum-

bly born but nohle of spirit, had been heneficent and good. Under him, the empire had grown in influence and power. But law was law, and custom immutable custom. There could he no stepping hack, now.

It was still very early as Minos left the palace, this morning of the fatal autumnal equinox. He kissed Ellen and Ariadne, his small daughters, tenderly. He thought of the three other children his wife had borne to him, who had preceded him to the realm of shadows. Kallathu's face was set in stiff control. But that control broke as Druas kissed his tall twelve-year-old son, who hore his name. She fled to the palace, weeping.

Druas set his face to the hills, and the little company of priests closed in about him. They began to climb the slopes of Ida, rearing her crest behind the beautiful city of Knossos.

Druas looked back once, to gasp at the sunrise splendor of the town. Its wide and cleanly streets, the gayly painted villas; the port and sail-dotted sea beyond were like a page from the book of Beauty. He turned away again, a lump in his throat. All this to leave, to step into the dark maze of death; never to see another dawn.

Up the winding road they went. Druas half expected to have to use his arms, the target and the sword he still bore with him. For even now, he looked for some foolish attempt on the part of mistaken friends to rescue him.

They reached the last pathway. The priests paused for the solemn ceremonies of the last ascent. A furtive movement caught the eye of Druas; probably a cony, or a half-wild sheep or goat. The garland was placed upon his head; the only crown a Minos ever wore.

THEY went the prescribed fifty paces, and paused for the second ceremony. Druas grew impatient; it was had enough to die, without being so interminably long about it! Strange: death was punishment for a criminal, reward for the Minos. But he wished they'd get on with it.

The third ceremony dragged on, and the fourth; but at last they were at the mouth of the Cave of the Illustrious Council of the Dead. Soon, this would be—it. The end. Minos was weary of it, now, and almost panting in spite of the hard fitness of his gymnast's body.

There was a sudden flurry, and figures swarmed in front of the cave. A sword or dagger was presented at the heart of every priest. A cry of amazement and dismay went up.

"Let be!" cried Druas. "Hold! The gods will destroy us all for this impiety!"

"Never!" cried a boy in light armor, a brazen helmet on his head catching



the sun. "Save him, men! Save the Minos!"

"No! I am Minos still! I command you, cease this folly before the gods strike us all down, and our nation with us!"

Druas drew his own sword, and poised it beneath his own heart.

"Draw off and let be, or I will end my own life and end this nonsense now. I pray that that may expiate your sin and atone to the gods for your hlasphemy!"

Reluctantly the rescuers sheathed their weapons. The interrupted invocation was resumed.

Father Nannar, great Anshar, hail!
Hail Britomart, great Serpent-goddess, hail!
Illustrious Council of departed rulers, hail!
The Minos cometh: hail, ye shades, all hail!

The boy took off his helmet, and dark tresses cascaded about his shoulders. He dropped the pleated warrior's skirt, and a robe's hem swept toward the ground.

"Kallathu! You again, and in this folly! You, once Serpent-goddess, Herpetathea of Crete! May Britomart forgive!"

Kallathu's face was tragic. A bloodless pallor drained it to a yellow mask.

"Druas, forgive. I had to try."

"Come," said the arch-priest gently. "Noon is near."

"Druas—"

"Yes, my life and love?"

"Do you remember, those long years ago, how we trod the maze together, hand in hand?"

"I have remembered it through all the pleasures since. And I will carry the memory of your love and loyalty with me into the maze of death, my dear."

"You will take something else with you, liege lord. I might have honor as your widow. Our children will be reared in splendor hy the State. But instead of sharing that splendor, Druas, I am sharing this thing with you too. I'm going with you."

"Kallathu, no! Never! I forbid this thing!"

"Minos," the priest insisted, "it is noon."

The keen bronze blade, brought close to tempered hardness hy incessant heating, was raised. The final ritual was begun.

Druas could make no move now. He was bound by law and by tradition more firmly than any ropes could have bound him. At the proper moment, he could do nothing but submit, for the sake of Crete and for the empire. Then might his potent shade direct and guide the realm from the world beyond the dark.

The knife was drawn across his throat. His eyes bulged and he tried to speak, for at that very instant Kallathu drew a dagger from her girdle and plunged it into her own heart. He was giddy; his body began to float. The noon glare faded in a swiftly descending dark, even as when he had long before stepped into another; earthly maze.

IT was not a voice; it was a clear thought, reaching his mind through ebbing consciousness:

"Druas, the maze is dark. Quickly, take my hand."

"Kallathu, beloved! Here!"

The maze was dark indeed; hut their hands clung tightly to this last tangible evidence of the . . . . presence of . . . . of a . . . . of a beloved . . . .

The arch-priest looked down at the bodies on the hlood-soaked sod.

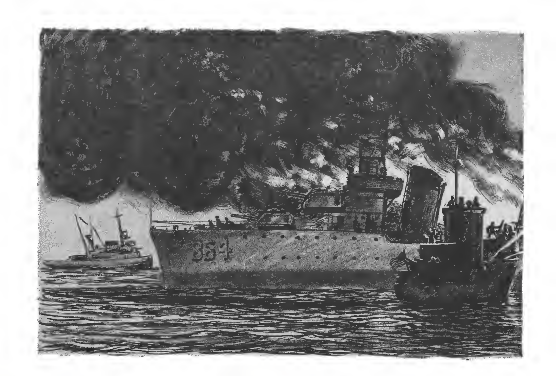
"Strange," he said, "how the death-struggle hrought their bodies together. And see how their hands cling, the one to the other."

"I cannot break the grip," said an under priest. "No woman, surely, can lie in the Cave of the Illustrious Dead?"

"There is no law, for or against. But this is an omen. Let them sleep together. Bring torches; we must carry them in to the recesses of the cave. It is well; all is well with Crete!"

Cruel? Unnecessary? Who can say? Which of our customs of today will be socially acceptable three thousand years from now? Today we call it senseless; it seems to us defeat and tragedy. But to Druas, it was victory: victory of the spirit over the flesh; victory for the nation over personal desires.

So long as men like Druas ruled Crete, truly all was well!



PICKET STATION

Author's Note:

"Picket Station" is firmly based on fact, but for various excellent reasons the principal character preferred not to have any additional personal publicity. To accede to his wishes, the author has changed names, ship numbers and names, dates and other identifying data. In telling the story in this way, however, the author has adhered closely to the basic facts. This is a true story of one of our "little ships" in gallant action against our enemy on the Okinawa picket line. . . . The opinions and assertions contained in this story are the author's and are not to be construed as official or as reflecting the views of the Navy Department or of the naval service at large.

HEROISM in battle occurs casually, almost accidentally, when a dangerous situation confronts a man who is to be tested by it. Outstanding bravery distinguishes the man who knows in his very vitals the corroding acid of fear and yet faces up to his challenge, meets and overcomes it. On only a few occasions during the recent war did the requirements of situation, time and place meet so that a man rose above fear to a new height of gallantry and intrepidity. The heroic actions of these officers and men have sustained and enriched our naval tradition. . . .

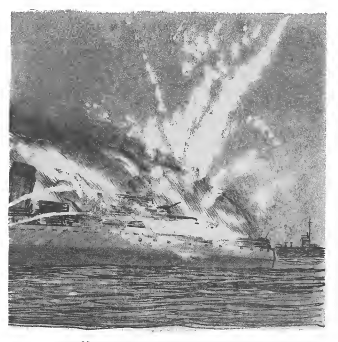
Radar Picket Station 42 lay dark and sullen under an overcast morning sky.

As Support Landing Craft 456 steamed along slowly through a moderate sea, she nodded politely to the gentle swells. To port, three sister ships cruised comfortably, while beyond them toward Hagushi Beach sixty miles to south'ard, the flagship *Brown*, the *Joseph M. Barker*, and two other destroyers, which completed the complement of the picket station, maintained their diamond-shaped formation.

From his captain's seat in the conning-tower, Lieutenant McGown estimated the bearing on the destroyer *Brown*, and his ruddy face wore a frown. "Better put on a few turns, Bill," he said to the Officer of the Deck.

Just a kid ensign, Bill—three months out of Reserve Midshipman School at Chicago. Nice lad, though—coming along well, considering his inexperience. Lieutenant McGown had to smile at the way he patronized his swarthy, dark-haired OOD. But for a spot promotion to command this gunboat, he too was an ensign.

McGOWN pushed back his rain-jumper hood, ran his hands through his rumpled brown hair and down across his salt-smeared face, and looked up at the drippy black undersides of the low clouds. Fine weather for kamikazes. It had been nice and quiet on the picket station for the past two days. The Japs wouldn't leave them alone much longer. They weren't that dumb. They knew that picket radio warnings brought out the fighters which usually knocked their suicide planes out of the sky, before they ever reached Hagushi or Buckner Bay anchorages and the vulnerable transports and supply ships. Air Support Control in the *Eldorado* and the picket ships had certainly turned in a magnificent job.



NOW CAN BE TOLD THE HEROIC STORY OF THE LITTLE SHIPS THAT SCREENED THE SUPPLY LINES FOR THE OKINAWA CAMPAIGN AGAINST DESPERATE KAMIKAZE ATTACKS.

by

REAR ADMIRAL ARTHUR AGETON, USN (Ret)

"Privateer," the voice radio blasted out of a long silence. *"This is Fancy. Flash Red! Bogies!"* The loud, tinny voice gave bearing and distance of the approaching raid in a direct reading code that could have fooled no one. *"Privateer acknowledge. O-ver."*

"Tune the damn' thing down," said McGown irritably.

"Roger," to Fancy, the Officer-in-Tactical-Command, from each ship in succession whined out of the squawk-box. Lieutenant McGown nodded to his OOD, who acknowledged last of all, as was proper for the smallest and most junior ship.

"Go to General Quarters, Bill," said McGown. "Forty miles won't take long. Get your lookouts on the job. And keep 'em informed as to bearing and distance."

The General Alarm squawked its raucous summons. Officers and men poured out onto the well-deck and fantail. Lieutenant McGown slipped into his gray kapok lifejacket and pulled on his steel helmet.

From the forward splinter screen he watched the busy scene below. At the forties, gun-crews pulled on their flash-proof clothing, trained and elevated the gun-mounts, broke out clips of ammunition, and tested telephones with conn. Aft, the damage-control gang tested their gas handy-billy pump with a one-cylinder roar, and happily, a good stream sprayed over the side.

A proud crew, he thought. You wouldn't know them for the mob that put the ship into commission in Brooklyn last February. What a rabble, he thought affectionately. Not a man jack of them had ever sailed blue water. And he hadn't been so sharp, himself.

BUT this was June second; now the boys knew their stuff—veterans every one.

He strained his eyes, searching the northwest quadrant through his binoculars. He couldn't see a thing through the heavy overcast, not even the planes of their own fighter CAP.

"Splash one," said the squawk-box.

"Tell the guns to stand by," McGown heard his OOD. He grinned with satisfaction.

"Coming in," the voice radio warned.

McGown jerked his head up. A flash of silver trailed a black scarf of smoke out of the dark underbelly of a low cloud close on his starboard bow. A Jap Val!

"Commence firing!" he cried.

"Fug, fug, FUG, FUG," said his forties.

Some of the shells hit home. The Jap plane roared across their bow, diving on the *Barker*. They usually went after the big ships, with their impressive array of radar antenna. He gave quick thanks for the anonymity of a little ship.

EVERY gun on the picket station opened up. Bright lines of tracers criss-crossed the gloomy sky. Smoke from the five-inch battery of the *Barker* nearly obscured that ship each salvo. The Jap pilot could see well enough, though. He pulled out of a steep dive and leveled off at the destroyer.

"God, don't let him make it," someone cried.

The pilot fought his controls, trying frantically to hold his plane in the air. "Going to be close," McGown gritted out.

Crash! One wing of the Val hit the edge of the *Barker's* main deck amidships. The plane crashed alongside. McGown watched white-hot flames burn her gray side paint to black.

"Safe, thank God," he muttered.

A geyser foamed up alongside the *Barker*. Tons of water cascaded down on her after decks. Seconds later, McGown heard the bomb explosion and felt its blast.

"All engines, ahead full," he called out. "Away fire and rescue party."

As his ship built up to speed, he heard Fancy order all support craft alongside the stricken destroyer. Coming closer, he could see fire through water pouring from her after deckhouse. Already she had taken a list to starboard. He changed course to bring his ship on the port quarter of the destroyer, so as to be upwind of the fire. The three undamaged destroyers were running a screening circle at high speed around the *Barker*.

"The other gunboats are coming up now, Cap'n," the OOD reported. "But we got the edge on them, this time."

McGown nodded at the eager young face. "Test all handy-billies on the well deck, Bill," he said. "And have the fire and rescue party stand by on the fo'c's'le. She's going to need help. I want 'em ready to pile aboard the second I put her alongside."

As they passed under the *Barker's* stern, he slowed his engines. The fire was hot in his face. Handy-billy engines roared and streams of water poured from their hose nozzles. For-

Illustrated by Robert Mariner



ward, water from other hoses reached the *Barker* as he rounded up close under her quarter.

"I don't like that fire on her fantail, Bill." McGown grabbed a megaphone. "On the well deck," he bellowed. "Get hoses going on those powder tanks."

He let the ship coast well forward before he backed to bring his bow against the destroyer's side. The fire and rescue party scrambled across. When their equipment was on board, he let the gunboat ride aft until all of his hoses reached the fire. It still blazed brightly all around the ammunition racks. If those five-inch shells cooked off, he would rather be somewhere else.

As the other support craft added their hoses to the fight, they made headway. Through the smoke he watched his party rig their suction hoses, and soon their pumps poured water out of the flooded compartments below.

With the *Barker* dead in the water, McGown couldn't hold his ship in position. "Think I'll get clear for a moment, Bill. Shift all hoses to the fo'c's'le."

As he backed away, he heard a series of small explosions. "Look, Cap'n!" Bill cried.

Huge holes had been blasted in the forty-millimeter gun shield, where shells in the racks had exploded. Several more shells cooked off.

"Glad we got out when we did."

"If anybody asked me, I'd just as soon not go back."

McGown looked at Bill sharply. The young ensign grinned back at him, mockingly. "All engines ahead one-third, sir?" he asked. His voice came out shaky.

"Right."

As they approached slowly through water covered with burning fuel oil, Bill looked around questioningly. McGown nodded reassurance. Slowly he brought his bow up to the port quarter until four hoses reached the fire. They could put out this fire all right, but McGown still didn't like those five-inch shells cooking in the ready racks.

Out of a long silence, the squawk-box spoke, *Barker* calling Fancy. *"Few casualties. None serious. Condition of ship critical. Forward engine-room flooded. All power off ship. Listed to starboard fifteen degrees. Abandoning ship."*

"Secure fire hoses, Bill," Lieutenant McGown said presently. "The fire's out. I'm going alongside to take off her crew."

"Better keep the hoses going, sir. If a shell explodes, it will light off that oil."

"Right."

McGown headed the ship around to parallel the *Barker*. Other gunboats nosed in forward. As they put out their bow line, two more forty-millimeter shells let go. With oil blazing up all around the ship, McGown held her in close to the *Barker*.

The destroyer's starboard gunnels were only inches above the oily water. "She can't stay afloat much longer," he muttered to Bill.

A quiet, orderly group, the men of the *Barker's* crew cued up on deck, climbed over the lifelines and jumped to the gunboat's fo'c's'le.

"Privateer, this is Fancy," the squawk-box whined. *"Cease salvage. Rescue personnel and get clear."*

Many officers and men still waited patiently on the after deck for their turn. Forward, men were jumping overboard and swimming to small boats and life rafts.

Bill looked around at McGown. "Hold her in," the captain said shortly. "We'll take the rest of 'em off."

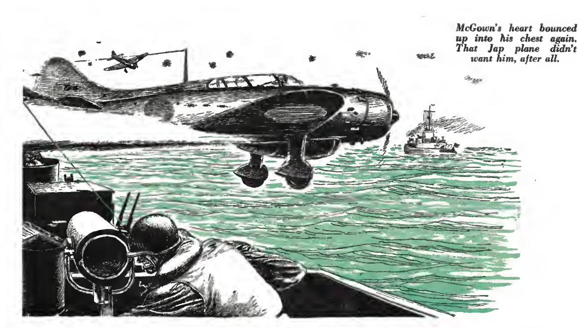
It wouldn't be pleasant alongside when she capsized, McGown thought. "Send word to the Exec to make a list of the men we take aboard, Bill," he said aloud.

As McGown backed the engines to hold position, his fire and rescue party lowered their gear onto the fo'c's'le. The squawk-box was talking again, Fancy calling LCS 456. *"Get clear. Get clear immediately. Tell the Barker men to jump and swim for it."*

McGown looked around at the trim hull of the *Brown* racing by. "Several strangers in our midst," he thought—a destroyer transport, a seagoing tug, and two destroyers. The Boss had got help in a hurry. Wonder how long before he would really get mad.

The other gunboats cleared the sinking ship. Impatiently, McGown waited for the last man of the *Barker* crew. *"Four-fifty-six,"* the voice radio snarled. *"Get out of there. I said, get clear, and I mean it."*

That was Fancy, in person, and he sounded plenty mad. With a feeling of relief, McGown put the engines astern. As the ship backed clear, they



McGown's heart bounced up into his chest again. That Jap plane didn't want him, after all.

hauled two men from the oily water to the safety of the well deck.

Four minutes later the *Barker* rolled slowly over on her side, until her red bottom paint showed down to her very keel. For an appreciable interval she lay motionless. Then her stern went down and her bow climbed above the horizon. Like a tired old whale, she slid down into the black water. Her jack staff disappeared last of all into the sea. . . .

Evening twilight came suddenly to the picket station. It had been a long, tough day. After transferring ninety-eight officers and men of the *Barker* to the destroyer transport, they resumed their routine patrolling of the station. Several bogies were reported before full dark, but none closed.

McGown sat in the conn and stared out blankly at the faint horizon. He was dead tired. For over a month now—a couple of days on picket station, then back to Hagushi or Kerama Retto for fuel, provisions and ammunition. Sometimes they had as much as two days "rest," with only four or five Flash Reds a night to break up their sleep. This could go on for six or eight months, if the Japs didn't sink the ship or kill him first. Not a bad chance that either one or both might happen.

He stretched his arms above his head and sighed. No good to worry. If it came, it came. In the meanwhile, keep your ship buttoned up and your powder dry. He settled back against the jeep seat purloined from a Saipan junk pile, and thought of more peaceful days.

Wisconsin! He could remember the house where he was born, twenty-one years ago last April. With a sudden wave of homesickness, he recalled the warm spring sun on the forested green hills, the hot and dusty smell of a dry summer, when there was scarcely a foot of muddy water in the swimming-hole. He wished he could shiver to some of that thirty-below zero weather they used to have when he went to high school in Milwaukee.

When he graduated from the Naval Academy last June, he was younger than many of his classmates. After that, indoctrination training at the Naval Air Station, Jacksonville. But aviation was not for him. At the Amphibious Training Base, Solomons, Maryland, he got his break. And what a break! Never in his fondest dreams had he imagined that he would come out of the gunboat school a skipper. The competition was too keen. Some of those young reserve officers were plenty sharp.

IN December, he received orders to take a draft of men to Brooklyn, a crew for the brand new LCS (L) 456. Early in February they put the ship in commission. By the time his spot promotion to lieutenant caught up with him in March, the ship had transited the Canal to the Pacific.

As they steamed across the peaceful ocean, it was drill, drill, drill, and more drill, moving a square peg here, a round peg there, until you had an organization. Now, this crew could do anything.

He leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes, but he was too tired to sleep. Later, he crawled into his bunk below and dozed fitfully for a couple of hours. Well before dawn, he was back on the conn. With no more than usual anxiety, he watched the sky brighten to blue between scattered white clouds. Would more kamikazes come screaming down out of that sky today?

"Mighty peaceful morning," said the OOD.

McGown grinned at him cheerfully. "That's when you want to keep your brightest lookout."

Tomorrow, he thought, they'd be relieved—and none too soon. Three days on picket was enough for any crew. The ship probably wouldn't need fuel or ammo, but maybe the LST mother ship had received some fresh vegetables. The crew was getting pretty tired of this dehydrated stuff. And perhaps the ice-cream barge would be back from the Kerama Retto.— merrily tinkling its bell around the Hagushi anchorage like a mammoth Good Humor man. . . .

LCS 456 dipped her bow in periodic rhythm to the moderate swells. If they could get through evening twilight without a raid, this tour might not be so bad. But the chances were not too good. That raid yesterday looked like the beginning of another determined kamikaze offensive.

In the western sky, the sun slid down behind a fluffy white cloud. Funny that such a gorgeous display of color could be so laden with potential terror. The combat air patrol swung out of a cloud overhead and whipped in behind another—the pale blue underbodies of the fighters bare-

ly visible against the darkening blue of the sky. Very comforting to have them up there.

"Privateer," the voice radio whined. *"This is Fancy. Many bogies, three two zero, fifty miles. Flash Blue. Control Green. Privateer acknowledge."*

"Here we go again, Bill," said McGown to his youngest watch officer, who was just taking over the deck.

The General Alarm squawked. During the orderly confusion of taking station, McGown listened carefully to the information flowing over the squawk-box. Straining his eyes through binoculars, he searched the distant sky. Something flashed across the pink bottom of a cloud—a Navy figbter.

"Flash Red," someone cried on the conn.

McGown picked up a scarf of black smoke trailing from the bottom of a cloud. On the tail of a dark plane, he saw a silver glint and pin-point flashes. The Jap plane dived sharply and headed for the picket ships.

The little Navy fighter whipped about ahead of the slower Jap and bored in for the kill. The Jap plummeted straight down, flame bright on his tail surfaces and after fuselage. The fighter gave him another burst, pulled out, and climbed upstairs. Tensely, McGown watched for the crash and explosion. A couple hundred feet off the water, the Jap pilot pulled his riddled plane out of the dive.

Suddenly, the Jap plane was flying right down his throat. McGown let his binoculars fall to hang from their strap. "Kick her ahead port, Bill. Keep her broadside to and all guns bearing."

He braced himself against the starboard splinter shield. "There's another just behind it, Cap'n," he heard Bill say. "Commence firing?"

"Not yet."

He could see the other plane diving toward them, a little to the left and much higher than the first. Undamaged, too. That was the dangerous one.

All ships opened up, but still he held his fire, waiting. That's tbe way he'd brought up his gunner's gang—fire discipline. Too many shells were wasted shooting at targets that you couldn't reach. The two planes roared directly at them.

"They're after me this time!" he thought. His heart pounded unpleasantly, and his lips were dry. He held fire a second longer, to prove to himself he wasn't too badly scared.

"Commence firing," he said quietly. His beart alternately pounded in his throat and throbbed in his boots.

"Fug, fug fug, fug," said his forties.

He hadn't opened up too soon. The shells tore into the wings and fuselage of the nearest plane. His heart bounced up into his chest again. That first Jap didn't want him, after all. The dark shape roared across the fo'c's'le. McGown saw the pilot's tense brown face, head bent forward until his forehead almost touched the instrument board.



Slowly, painfully, McGown straightened up and made his way to the well deck.

With approval, McGown saw his guns shift fire to the second plane. Behind him, he heard a crash and an explosion, but he was too fascinated to look around.

"Splash one!" someone cried above the roar of the guns.

Forty-millimeter shells crashed into the wings of the second kamikaze. The pilot held on doggedly toward the nearest destroyer. A shell exploded in his engine cowling. From one hundred feet, the pilot dived straight down on the Four-fifty-six.

"Hit the deck!" McGown shouted at the top of his lungs. He ducked behind the splinter shield.

Crash! To McGown, it seemed as if the plane landed right at his feet. With a roar, gasoline erupted into flame that flashed fifty feet above the conn. McGown jumped to his feet and backed away from the fire. "Keep the guns going, Bill," he cried, watching still a third plane hurtling toward tbem.

As he backed up onto the foot-rest of the port bridge seat, a hot blast scorched his back. An enormous explosion beat at his eardrums. The plane's bomb bad passed through the ship and exploded in the water alongside.

Struggling to his feet, he heard the forties still barking. Tbe third kamikaze, hit repeatedly, turned sharply and headed for the nearest destroyer. A pain stabbed through McGown's chest. He put his hand to his side. It came away wet and red.

He brushed the back of his hand across his blurry eyes. The ship was circling aimlessly to port.

"Steady on the course, Bill."

"Lost steering control, Cap'n."

"Stop all engines."

Bill called the order down a voicetube. "Lost engine control, Cap'n," he said presently.

"Get a messenger down to the engine-room. Let's stop running crazy like this, until we pull ourselves together."

McGown moved toward the forward splinter shield. A sharp pain burned in his right hip, and something stung his buttock. He must be pretty badly shot up!

Peering down at the well deck, he saw the men lead out a hose and connect it to a foam nozzle. Soon they played its stream at the base of the gasoline fire on the upper deck to port. From aft came the staccato roar of a gas handy-billy, but its stream was hidden by smoke and flame.

He swabbed his dripping forehead on his sleeve. "Getting too hot up here, Bill. Shift ship control to the well deck where we can do some good."

With the help of Roberts, the signalman, McGown clambered over the splinter shield, hung at arm's-length and dropped to the well deck. "How we doing, Rabnowski?" he asked the chief petty officer, who was connecting up another foam fire nozzle.

"Fine, Cap'n. We can handle it." He looked up at McGown. A startled expression flashed across his face. "Better take it easy, sir. You've been badly knocked about."

"I'll be all right."

From aft, McGown heard muffled cries and a beating of steel on steel. "What's that?"

"Some of the lads trapped in the mess compartment," Rabnowski replied. "Can't get the door open. We're trying to cool off that fire before it cooks them."

McGown shuffled aft to the heavy steel door. He grabbed a sailor by the arm. "Binelli; get a big Stillson and a crowbar and sledge. From the forward deckhouse."

"Stimson," he called to his second-class shipfitter. "Get your cutting torch."

The bomb blast had jammed tight the dogs on the big door. Two men

heaved ineffectually at the dog handle. Beyond the door, he could hear the cries of his men plainly.

Binelli came running aft with the tools. McGown took the Stillson and set it for the nut on the dog handle. Before the men heaved on the wrench, he knew it was no good. He let them pull on it for a moment, while he rigged a dog wrench with the crowbar in the end as a peavey bar. He slipped the wrench on the dog handle.

"Swing on it, lads, before it gets too hot."

As they swung their weight on the long bar, he grabbed the sledge and belabored the dog wrench. The handle gave, grudgingly at first, and then with a rush that threw the men to the deck. They jumped up and pried open the door. A blast of hot air and smoke blew out of the compartment. The heat seared the skin of McGown's face and hands, but he put his head down and went into the compartment. "This way, men," he called. "The well-deck door's open."

Several men staggered past him to the open door. As his eyes became accustomed to the haze, he saw a dark figure slumped down against the port bulkhead.

"Give me a hand with this fellow," he called out. He couldn't hear his own voice above the roar.

He pushed aft into the smoke. "Hope I'm not too far gone," he thought. He reached the sailor and tried to get him to his feet. The man was unconscious. "I can't do it," he thought. "I'm too weak."

He bent down, pulled the sailor's arms and body up over his left shoulder, and clasped his hands around the man's legs. Lifting the inert body tore at the wound in his chest until it hurt like fire.

"Lucky he's a small lad," McGown thought. Slowly and painfully he straightened up and made his way forward. He negotiated the high door coaming with great difficulty. Then he was out on the well deck in the cool open air. He carried the sailor forward, put him gently down on deck and sank down exhausted beside him.

The fire topside was nearly out. Two sister ships approached from windward. "Oh, Skee," he called to the chief. "Get a hose going in the mess compartment. Still a bad fire aft."

His face and hands burned like a furnace. He bent over the man beside him.

"Anything I can do, Captain?" a voice above him asked.

McGown looked up into the round, blackened face of Mercado, the ship's pharmacist's mate. "Take a look at this lad. I've got to get back on the job."

He pulled himself to his feet. Staggering a little, he went aft. In the mess compartment he bumped into Rabnowski.

"We've got it licked, Cap'n," the chief said. "This hose is taking it from forward, and the boys aft have a handy-billy going."

The flames burned McGown's face even hotter. "You're doing fine, Skee. Keep it up. I'm going on deck and see if we can get the ship under way."

As he moved forward, the ship lurched. He stumbled. Then he coughed, and a dagger-sharp pain stabbed at his chest. By the radio-room hatch, a sailor grabbed him frantically.

"Which way out, for God's sake? I can't see a thing."

McGown guided the lad to the door and stood aside while three other men stumbled past into the life-giving fresh air. On deck, he saw that gunboats had moored along each side. He gave silent thanks. Crossing toward LCS 286, he stumbled over a deck seam; he slid down onto his knees and toppled over on the steel deck. . . .

Afterward, he could remember nothing of being carried off the ship in a stretcher, or of the quick passage south to Hagushi. But always ticking away at the back of his mind was a most satisfying thought. They had saved their ship to fight another day.

Followed weeks of physical distress. From the transport *President Hoover,* Lieutenant McGown was transferred to Base Hospital 18 on Guam, where, already in a critical condition from his chest wound, he developed phlebitis of the left leg. Evacuated to the States by air, he came eventually to the Naval Hospital at Great Lakes, where he was joined by his father and mother. Surgery and excellent care resulted in rapid improvement, and three months' convalescent leave at home in Wisconsin followed.

Meanwhile, paper work on the exploits of LCS 456 and her captain piled up in the various command ships of the Amphibious Forces. A modest report on the ship's actions, with recommendations for award of a Bronze Star Medal to Lieutenant McGown were initiated by his group commander, Lieutenant-Commander H. A. Hobson, of the Naval Reserve, whom McGown had never seen since he took command of his ship. Accompanied by notes and comments, memoranda, recommendations and endorsements from "Fancy," "Rogue," and Commodore Moosbrugger, commander of all screen vessels at Okinawa, the correspondence, now fifty typewritten pages in quintuplicate, arrived on board the *Eldorado,* flagship of Commander Amphibious Forces, recommending LCS 456 for a Presidential Unit Citation, and Lieutenant McGown for everything from a Bronze Star to a Navy Cross. . . .

It was some weeks before Lieutenant McGown learned the fate of his ship. His Exec had taken over command. Fires extinguished, her sister ship, LCS 143, took her in tow. During the night her engineers repaired the damaged engine controls. Casting off the tow line at daybreak, LCS 456 proudly steamed into Hagushi Anchorage under her own power. Months after the war had ended, Lieutenant McGown learned that his ship had been awarded the Navy Unit Commendation for its outstanding accomplishments on those stirring days in June.

Of all the letters, citations and awards, Lieutenant McGown prizes most highly a letter written by Commander Phillips, his flotilla commander, four days after the historic action:

> "You and your ship's company are commended for your gallant conduct and heroic actions in your battles with enemy planes. Your conduct during both actions and in fighting fire and saving your ship after it had been hit by a Jap suicide plane are in keeping with the highest traditions of the naval service. The entire flotilla is proud of you and sends its heartfelt admiration and deepest sympathy for your losses."

On January seventh, at the White House, with his mother and father and younger brother and sister as witnesses, President Truman presented to Lieutenant McGown the Congressional Medal of Honor for "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity." As the President read the citation, McGown thought of his ship and crew, of Bill and Roberts, the signalman, of Rabnowski, Binelli, Stimson, Mercado and the rest—the finest crew that ever sailed and fought a gunboat. They might be true, the words of the citation. His "stanch leadership, capable direction and indomitable determination" might have helped to make the crew what it was that day. But their gallant courage and fighting spirit had put him where he was today.

The reading of the citation ended. The President took the medal from his aide and hung it about Lieutenant McGown's neck from its blue star-sprinkled ribbon. Perhaps the President was thinking, as he had said on previous similar occasions: "I would rather be receiving this medal today than be President of the United States."

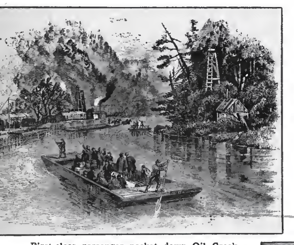
Truly was it written: "His valiant spirit of self-sacrifice in the face of extreme peril enhanced and sustained the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."



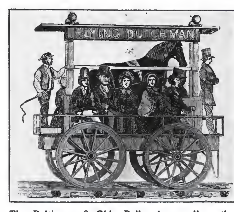
The overland mail coach to California during the gold-rush, crossing a ford of the Osage River at night, preceded by a man on horseback with a light to show the way.

TRAVEL

After your vacation trip in your own car, or by plane or steamer or air-conditioned train, contrast it with the travel techniques of our fathers.

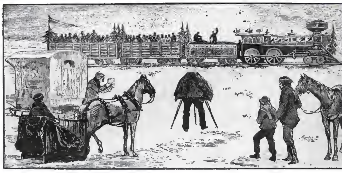


First-class passenger packet down Oil Creek during the Pennsylvania oil boom in 1864. Flat-boats commuted between the various points along the Oil Creek in regular runs.



The Baltimore & Ohio Railroad as well as the Charleston & Hamburg fitted out cars with a tread-mill operated by horses in 1829 and '30.

Below: A winter railway was laid across the St. Lawrence on the ice from Hochelaga to Longueil.



Below: Community singing in a club-car of the Union Pacific Railroad in 1875.



Below: On a tricycle built for two along the Riverside Drive in New York City about 1886.



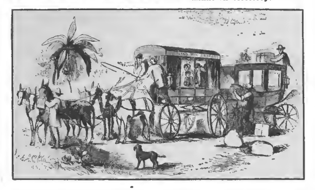




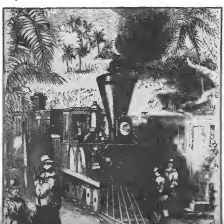
Starting of the first overland mail coach from St. Louis, Mo., driven by John Butterfield, Jr., son of the president of the Overland Mail Company, on Sept. 16, 1858. From the Mississippi to San Francisco, the first semi-weekly trip was accomplished in 24 days.

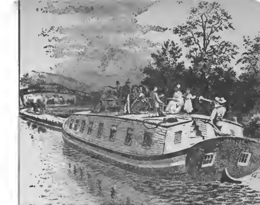
At left: In 1829 and '30 a railway car with sails communicated between Charleston and Hamburg on the South Carolina Railroad. Each car carried fifteen passengers, and with a good wind, it could make fifteen miles an hour.

Below: Changing stage coach for a "celerity wagon" on the Overland Mail, 1858. The route led over 2,729 miles of mostly unknown territory.



Below: A train of the Panama Railroad carrying gold-seekers for the seven-mile trip from Aspinwall on the east coast to Gatun.





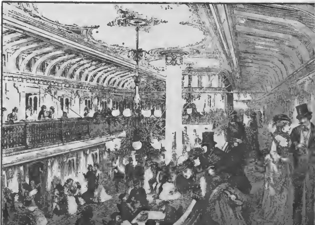
Before the days of rapid transit—passengers on deck of an Erie Canal packet boat, about 1840. It took five days to reach Buffalo from Albany.



Among those sailing for Europe were our American cousins—Grandma, Grandpa, and the five youngsters all set to "get culture abroad."

OLD PRINTS FROM THREE LIONS, SCHOENFELD COLLECTION

Below: Great hall of the river steamboat *Bristol,* 1875. The length and navigability of the great American waterways produced in the Nineteenth Century a fleet of luxurious steamboats which were without precedent.







Nicky

A ROBOT DETECTIVE? YES SIR! AND SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL, BOTH AS A ROBOT AND A DETECTIVE.

THIS character Nicky Lugan is, from way back, a tinkerer, and since in Udella—which has no more than fifteen thousand people in it—everybody knows everybody, Kopal, on the city desk, wasted no time in shooing me off to interview Nicky when it became evident that a tinkerer had done the dirty to Big George Loke.

"Barney," Kopal said, "trot on over and talk to this Nicky Lugan. You know him, and you have done features on him; and maybe he likes you —though why, it would be hard to ascertain."

I used to know Nicky Lugan back in the days when he only had three vending machines. At that time he lived over Venerik's Garage, and the only time anybody would see Nicky would be when he trotted by, because he covered his three machines on foot, and the money for a bowl of chili for dinner had to be grabbed out of one of the machines.

He still lives over Venerik's Garage. And he has not changed in the seventeen years it took him to work up from three machines to two hundred and eighteen, the current count. The machines are in nice spots all over the county, and they vend candy, cigarettes, milk, soft drinks and so on. Now Nicky has a guy who makes the repairs and the collections, and it is long since Nicky has trotted from place to place.

He averages five dollars per month per machine after paying off his man, which is a splendid two fifty a week, and more than hay.

He is a little round man with the expression of a young owl who has found out that life can be beautiful. And a natural tinkerer!

I went up the steps and knocked, and he opened the door and said: "Why, Barney! How nice of you to call on me! You know Moe, of course."

I have never been able to break myself of the habit of nodding at Moe when Nicky introduces me to him.

Moe is the only robot in Udella. He is Nicky's hobby, and the reason why Nicky hasn't married, and the reason why he still lives over Venerik's Garage and takes mail-order courses in electronics. You take a natural tinkerer and feed him some electronics courses, and you generally end up with something.

They say all first novels are autobiographical. Maybe all first robots are the same way. The only differences between Nicky and Moe are that Moe is two and a half feet taller and about two hundred pounds heavier, and his insides are full of wire and gunk, and his exposed parts are made of aluminum and stainless steel.

But he has the same, round, happy, contented face, and the lenses he has instead of eyes have the same warm, placid look that Nicky's eyes have.

There is also one other difference: Where the back of Moe's neck should be, there is a very complicated arrangement of little gimmicks like you find two of on a light plug.

"Sit down, Barney," Micky said. "Moe is on house current, but I haven't got him coördinated yet."

I sat down, and Nicky trotted over to a wall cabinet and took out a small black box with a number of holes in it. He went over to Moe and plugged the box onto the back of Moe's neck. I noticed that on the side of the black box it said, "SOCIAL" in small neat white letters.

The big metal head turned slowly, scanning the room, and came to rest on me. As usual, he gave me the shudders.

"You remember Barney," Nicky said.

"Hello, Barney," Moe said. His voice is somewhat like what would happen if you were flat on your back in the cellar with a tin washtub over your head.

"Hello, Moe."

"How are you, Barney?"

"Just fine, Moe. And you?"

"I'm all right, thank you."

"Mix us a drink, Moe," Nicky said briskly.

Moe stood up. The floor creaked under his weight. Nicky told me once that Moe has walked and moved a lot better since he outfitted him with a mess of those tiny electric motors that were Air Corps surplus after the war. Moe used to click and chatter a lot. Now he moves with a slow hum.

He moved heavily out into the kitchen, and I heard glasses clink.

Nicky smiled. "I suppose you want to do another feature on Moe, Barney?"

I was uncomfortable. "Not this time, Nicky. We're overdue for one, but not this time. This time I want to know if the cops have been to see you."

Nicky looked troubled. "They had me go to see them. They sent a car. They had a lot of questions to ask. It almost seems as if they think I killed Big George Loke." He laughed nervously. "I didn't, of course."

"I'm afraid they'll be back to see you again, Nicky."

At that moment Moe came back in, carefully carrying a tray. He started toward Nicky. "Company first," Nicky said. Moe stopped in his tracks, turned and brought me my drink. Then he took Nicky his. There was one remaining drink on the tray—a shot glass half-full of machine oil. Moe set the tray aside, sat down on the couch, said, "Here's how," and knocked off the machine oil. He hiccuped once.

NICKY looked proudly at me. "Cute, huh? I added that last week. Actually, the drink lubricates his knee and ankle joints."

"It has been known to do the same to mine," I said. "But to get back to you, Nicky: The cops will be back."

"Certainly they don't think I have time to go around killing people, Barney. I'm much too busy with Moe. My goodness!"

I had to count it out for him on my fingers: "One—Big George Loke got into the vending-machine business two years ago. He's been doing well."

"He hasn't hurt me any, Barney."

I ignored him: "Two—people think you're a little crazy, staying up here all the time and making improvements on Moe, and then taking him down to the tavern once a week."

"What's queer about that? Moe is better company than most people."

and the Tin Finger

by JOHN D. MACDONALD

"Three—Big George was killed with just the sort of gimmick you would think up. And you've got the shop here to make it."

"They wouldn't tell me about the —ah—gimmick."

"Don't you read the papers? It was a cute little item: It clamped on the inside of the front wheel of Big George's car. It was okay in the city. But when he got it up to a high speed, centrifugal force pulled a little weight out on the end of a spring until it finally touched a copper plate. That made contact and a dry cell exploded just enough powder to blow the wheel off. George was spread out over fifty feet of three-lane concrete."

Nicky fingered his chin. "Very good. Very good indeed! If I ever decide to kill anyone, I certainly hope I think of as nice a thing as that."

You see, Nicky has always been a tinkerer.

While I questioned Nicky, Moe fixed us another drink, knocked off his second shot of machine oil and hiccuped twice. "That way," Nicky said, "I can tell how much he's had. I don't want him to flood his bearings."

"We certainly wouldn't want that," I agreed.

Finally Nicky called Moe over, had him turn around while Nicky took off the "SOCIAL" black box and put one on called "COOKING." As Moe walked around, the electric cord reeled up and unreeled through a small hole in the base of his spine. He seemed very careful not to get tangled in the cord.

"Fix dinner, Moe," Nicky said, "—for two. Steak, baked potatoes, frozen limas, a tossed salad with French dressing, coffee, and lay out the cigars. Call us when it's ready to serve. We'll eat at the kitchen table."

Moe bowed and tromped off, his little motors humming.

"That's new, isn't it?" I asked.

Nicky looked proud. "Not so very new. He could always cook. But now he doesn't burn things the way he used to, and he uses more seasoning. And he hasn't broken a dish in two months."

I was worried, and I had no reason to keep it from Nicky. Finally I said: "Nicky, if they can't pin it on you, the very least they'll do is put you away in a padded cell."

His eyes grew round with terror. "No! No, Barney! You wouldn't let them!"

"Moe is a nice gu—a nice robot, Nicky; but he's made you a few enemies, you know. Remember when he walked up in the dark and tapped Mrs. Berril on the shoulder? She turned and slugged him, and had to have three stitches taken in her hand. And remember the day he went into the school by mistake. Eleven cases of hysterics in the third grade alone. No, Nicky. I think they could do it to you, and I think a lot of people would be darn' well pleased over it."

"But—but—but—"

"Exactly. The real murderer has to be found, or you'll go on a trip, Nicky. I'm your friend, or I wouldn't be telling you all this."

Dinner was an unhappy meal. Nicky kept sighing, and he didn't eat much. I could swear that Moe kept giving him worried looks. Moe slipped up when he lit my cigar. He tried to hold the lighted match under my chin. Nicky was very embarrassed about the whole thing. "Just a minor adjustment," he said. "Something came loose, I guess."

WHEN I was ready to go, Nicky said: "What would you do if you were me, Barney?"

"If I were you? Why, I think I'd darn' well try to find out who killed Big George. That seems a lot better than sitting around."

"I wouldn't know where to start, Barney."

"Start where the cops start. Only be a little smarter than the cops."

He walked me to the door. Moe, with his "SOCIAL" box back on, said: "Good night, Barney."

"Good night, Moe. So long, Nicky."

"Wait a minute, Barney," Nicky said, "before you go. What does a good detective do?"

"So you've decided to take my advice? Good! A good detective is very



Just as McGee went out in front of the speeding truck, Moe hooked a big finger in his collar.

observant. He has good eyes, and he sees everything and remembers everything. He tries to find the motive for a killing, and then he finds the opportunity. With everything sewed up, he puts the finger on the criminal."

"Good night, Barney," Nicky said.

As I went down the narrow stairs, I could hear him talking to Moe. I heard the deeper tone of Moe's answer.

I went back to the shop and hammered out an item that editorialized between the lines, because I like Nicky, and I did not like to think of Moe rusting in a corner while Nicky was tucked into the county vacation spot.

As I had expected, they hauled Nicky down for more questioning, and he had no alibi, and Big George was extremely dead. Big George had endeared himself by passing out little favors from time to time, and the majority of the people of Udella were unhappy to see the source of the little presents stopped so suddenly, and they were more than a bit annoyed with Nicky Lugan and began to scream for his scalp.

The inquest practically turned into a mob scene when Al McGee, who worked for Big George, and was consequently out of a job, jumped up and yelled out: "My pal was killed by Lugan and that big tin monster!" It was an unfriendly way to refer to Moe.

Naturally the widow, Julie Loke, was in tears, a wet little ball of handkerchief clamped in her mitt and mascara making dark streaks down her cheeks. Big George was sufficiently popular in Udella so that nobody ever made mention of the fact that on a week-end in Philly, Big George had found Julie third from the left in the front row, which is where they generally put the lookers, and contrary to tradition, he had married her.

It is rumored that she sometimes pines for the third-from-the-left spot, particularly as they were about to put her in a stripper spot, and maybe her practicing the routine was what hooked Georgie.

The verdict was by "person or persons unknown," and I found out later that a couple of the jury, thinking hard of Moe, wanted to have it by "person or persons or thing unknown," thinking of Moe.

The police worked hard on it; and the D.A., solicitous of his imminent campaign for re-appointment, stood behind the police and kept jabbing them to dig up some decent evidence. Poor Nicky wore a deep track from his rooms over the garage to the police station and back. But the rest of the time, nobody saw him.

Once I went up and knocked at his door, and Moe told me to go away. I didn't argue. There is something about Moe that you don't want to argue with.

One night Duffy, on the Canal Street beat, came back to Headquarters, where I was consistently schneidering Archy Wandell, and mentioned that Nicky and Moe were at the tavern around the corner from the garage, and had been there for some time.

Archy paid me, and I went to the tavern. Sure enough, they were in one of the back booths. As I walked by the bar, Al McGee, still unemployed, said: "Barney, my lad, I caution you about going back there. That Lugan is criminally insane and should be put away some place where he can't go around killing nice people with gimmicks."

"They are my friends," I said with dignity.

Al sneered, and turned back to the bar.

I have never seen Nicky so loosified. The black box on the back of Moe's neck said, "PARTY." A bottle of Scotch and a tin of machine oil stood on the table. Evidently they were drinking jolt for jolt. Nicky yelled for a glass for me, and then poured a drink all around. Moe hiccuped eleven times. I wondered about his bearings, and I looked under the table at Moe's big canvas shoes that cover his metal, articulated toes, and saw that they were soaked with oil.

"So you are drowning your sorrows?" I said to Nicky.

You could have hooked his grin around his ears. "Celebratin'," he said.

"About what? About being in a jam you can't get out of?"

"About getting a way out, palsy. About being brightest guy in Udella. Have 'nother."

The next drink did for Nicky. From then on, he couldn't wrap his lips around the words with enough precision so I could understand them.

Anyway, when a man has somebody to take care of him, I guess he can drink a little. At the stroke of one, Moe pushed me out of the way. I ended up in a sitting position about eleven feet away. Moe stood up, picked up Nicky and put him gently over a broad metal shoulder. In the other hand he took the bottle and the tin.

I walked back to the garage beside him. All the way back Moe sang "Sweet Adeline" in a basso profundo imitation of Nicky's voice.

Not knowing why Nicky should be celebrating, I got back to the garage bright and early the next morning—ten o'clock. When I knocked, Nicky yelled for me to come in. He was back in his workshop, and Moe was stretched out on a massive bench. He was unplugged. The two storage batteries used for his outside jaunts, the ones that go in the cabinet built into his chest, were at one side, so I knew that Moe was immobilized.

Nicky was pale, but he was whistling between his teeth. He was doing something to Moe's eyes—fastening on a new sort of lens that made Moe look as though bis eyes were out on stalks.

"Are you busy today, Barney?" Nicky asked.

"Why?"

"Stay with Moe and me, will you? There ought to be a story in it."

I went into the other room and phoned Kopal. He said I should stick with Nicky and Moe, particularly as it was arranged that Nicky should be committed late in the afternoon when the right head doctor arrived from the county asylum. I decided I had better not tell Nicky.

When I walked back in, Nicky had the cabinet open in the front of Moe's chest. He lifted in the two six-volt storage batteries and screwed down the terminals. Moe made a small grunting sound and sat up.

Nicky trotted over to another bench, came back with one of those familiar little black boxes. "This is brand new!" he said happily.

On the side of it was neatly printed in white block letters—"DETECTION."

"This—this extroverted metallic personality is going to find out who rubbed out Big George?"

"Shhh! Don't sound so scornful, Barney. Moe has feelings too."

Nicky plugged the box onto the back of Moe's neck, and the big head swiveled, and Moe just stared holes in me.

"What makes with the eyes?" I asked.

"Now they are both photographic. The left one is telescopic and the right one is microscopic; and when he runs into a document, there's a little relay that kicks out, and the right one takes a photostat. I've been up since six working on him. But I knew last night that I'd have him ready by now."

Suddenly Moe's long arm flashed out and grabbed the back of my suit. He lifted me clear of the floor, and his other hand quickly emptied my pockets. "Stop him!" I yelled to Nicky. Nicky merely looked pleased.

Moe turned me in the air slowly and yanked one hand behind me. Then he released it and yanked the other one behind me. There were a series of clicking noises, a low humming sound, and I was dropped on the floor.

I spun around, still angry, and saw Moe hand Nicky a manila envelope which he apparently took out of a shallow drawer where his belt buckle should have been.

Nicky handed me the envelope. I slapped my pockets. All my possessions were back.

I looked in the envelope. The first sheet was a summary—height, age, weight, probable occupation. The

Illustrated by Charles Chickering



I walked to the garage beside him. All the way back Moe sang "Sweet Adeline" in a basso profundo.

second sheet was fingerprints. It was then that I noticed the black smudges on the tips of my fingers. Also in the envelope were two pictures. One full face, one profile. In each I had a startled expression.

Moe looked fatuous and complacent. He clicked again, opened the drawer and took out a set of photostats of all my personal papers—driver's license, laundry bill, sweepstakes ticket and a letter from a heavy blonde in Detroit.

"Observant, isn't he?" Nicky said proudly.

Moe bowed. I bowed to him.

"Now we start," Moe said. We walked down the stairs, side by side, Moe humming and clumping behind us.

"Where are we going?" I asked.

"The residence of the late George Loke."

Since it was but seven blocks away, and since Kopal is adamant about taxi fares, we walked.

When we were a hundred feet from the modern frame house t at had belonged to Big George, Nicky pointed to it and said: "There it is, Moe."

Moe stood quite still and looked at the house. He clicked twice. There was a shuffling sound, a muted inner thump, and he hooked a flexible metal finger around the drawer pull, slid it out and handed two pictures to Nicky.

I looked over Nicky's shoulder. Moe had used his telescopic lens. The first picture was of an upstairs bedroom window. I couldn't figure it out at first. Then I saw that it was a shot of a dressing-table mirror. In the lower left foreground was a bare and shapely arm. In the mirror was reflected the face of Mrs. George Loke, the fair Julie. She was combing her golden hair, and she had the faint look of a Mona Lisa.

The other shot was of the picture window in the side of what was apparently the living-room. Al McGee sat there in splendor, his shirt unbuttoned, a bottle by his side, his feet on a hassock, reading a racing form.

Nicky stuffed the pictures in his pocket and said: "Nice work, Moe."

"Elementary," Moe said.

I knew that Al lived in a room in the Udella House (one hundred rooms —one hundred baths).

The desk clerk was inclined to be stuffy about the whole affair. "Get that tin thing out of here! Take him away!"

The lobby was deserted except for an elderly citizen who was asleep. The single elevator was on an upper floor. Moe took a long look around, then reached over, picked up the desk clerk, tucked him under his arm and started for the stairs.

Nicky and I followed along behind him. The clerk made a tiny bleating sound, and fainted. Moe shook him gently, then laid him face down on one of the leather couches.

Al's room was locked, of course. Moe put the tip of his little finger in the key slot, and pulled the lock out of the door. We went in. The room smelled of hair oil, gin and soiled shirts.

Moe opened the bureau drawer and began clicking rapidly. I stood at the door and kept an eye on the hall. Nicky sat on the bed, proud and smiling. From the bureau, Moe, clicking again, turned to a locked trunk.

At last he lifted a tin box, a green one, out of the bottom of the trunk, opened it and began to click even more rapidly. As the shallow drawer filled up, he handed batches of photographs to Nicky.

Nicky sorted them into two piles. He brought the slim pile to me. He



Moe pointed a metal finger at McGee. "You lost money on the races. You could obtain explosives. You

didn't have to say a word. The top item was a photostat of an IOU for three thousand dollars from Al to Big George. A second was a tabulation of losses on the horses. The third was a photostat of a note addressed to *"Wonderful Man"* and signed *"Juliewoolie."* It said: *"He won't be back from Buffalo until ten tomorrow morning."*

I didn't understand the next few pictures. Nicky said: "Those are microphotographs of the cutting edges of some tools Moe found in that green tin box."

"But why?"

"Simple. We match those microphotographs to the shattered bits of the device that killed Big George. Every tool leaves its own particular signature. And this last thing here is a photostat of a diploma issued by the Triangle Trade Schools to one Albert McGee, saying that Mr. McGee successfully completed their course in metalworking."

Sirens ground to a throaty stop in front of the Udella House. Moe, with almost incredible speed, put everything back the way it had been, hummed out into the hall, pulled the door shut and shoved the lock-tube back into the splintered wood.

Nicky found the fire escape by the window at the end of the corridor. Moe went first. A high board fence hemmed us in when we reached the alley. Moe put his hand through the fence and pulled out two of the boards. We walked into the back yard of Hotstetta's Fish Mart, down the alley beside the laundry, and came out on West Main.

I got the impression that Moe was getting a little bit out of control. Nicky danced along beside him saying: "Wait a minute! Wait a minute!" Moe ignored him, merely lengthening his stride so that both Nicky and I had to trot to keep up.

"What goes?" I asked.

"Well," Nicky panted, "I tried to make him pretty independent in this detection business, and I guess I forgot to put any relay in there so that I can stop him."

"Nice!" I said, and looked longingly across to a bar and grill. I wanted to run in there and have several double boomers and forget.

Inside of half a block we picked up some eager citizens who began to trot along with us and ask questions.

We had no answers. When Moe turned left on Beechnut, I knew he was headed back for the home of the late George Loke.

I was getting winded. The nearest I have been to running for years is covering the high-school track meet.

Consequently, I had to pour on the coal to get onto Loke's doorstep as Moe opened the unlocked door and hurried in.

Moe stopped in the front hall. Albert McGee appeared in the archway



had motive and opportunity, and stand to gain by the murder."

to the big living-room. His eyes were a little wide.

"Lugan," he said, "take that son of a hardware store out of here!" Julie appeared behind McGee. She wore a pink dressing-gown.

Moe pointed a metal finger at McGee and said, in his hollow voice: "Albert McGee, you are accused of the murder of one George Loke. You are a metalworker. You killed Loke in a manner calculated to attract suspicion to Nicholas Lugan."

McGee snickered, jerked a thumb at Moe and said to Nicky: "You got a phonograph record in that thing? You're killing me!"

Moe ignored him. "You were in debt to George Loke. You are in love with Mrs. Loke. With both George and his competitor out of the vending-machine field, you could expect to marry Mrs. Loke and make a great deal of money."

"You're nuts," McGee said to Moe. It was an index of his growing fear that he addressed himself to Moe.

"You lost money on the races. You have tools in your room. You could obtain explosives. You had motive and opportunity, and stand to gain by the murder."

"You can't prove a damn' thing!" McGee said, but he began to look a little rattled.

"We have photostats of all pertinent documents, including microphotographs of the cutting edges of your tools," Moe said.

The hallway was very still. A batch of people stood out on the sidewalk wondering what was going on. Sirens sounded in the distance.

I looked at Julie. Her face was blank, her eyes speculative. She ran the tip of a pink tongue along a full under lip.

She turned on McGee and said: "Now I know! You killed my husband! You murderer!" She tried to hack his face with her blood-red fingernails.

"You double-crossing—" McGee muttered.

Suddenly he ducked and scooted under Moe's outstretched arm and ran out the front door. Moe turned like lightning and went after him. The crowd on the sidewalk scattered in all directions. The police sedan was just coming around the far corner.

A big furniture truck was exceeding the speed limit along the road in front of the house. McGee was smart. He figured he'd run across in front of the truck and delay pursuit. But at full speed, just as he went out in front of the speeding truck, Moe hooked a big finger in the back of McGee's collar.

There was a scream of tires on asphalt, a sickening thud and a great crash which sounded as though somebody had dropped fifteen milk cans down a brick staircase.

The case was settled right out there under the elm trees. McGee was killed instantly. Bits of Moe were scattered for a hundred feet around. Nicky, beyond speech, filled with grief, knelt by the major part of the torso of Moe.

I got the ear of the Chief of Police and got the photographs away from Nicky, and turned them over, along with the whole story. McGee's sprint was the final admission of guilt.

In hushed tones, the Chief told me that it would be okay if Nicky came in and made his statement when he was feeling better.

The body of McGee was taken away. The police collected the scattered fragments of Moe and put them by the curb. The crowd, bored with watching a little round man weeping over jumbled tinware, drifted off.

I walked over to Nicky and put my hand on his shoulder. I said: "Well, Moe did his job for you, pal."

He twisted away from me, his face contorted. "It was your fault!" he said hoarsely.

"Are you nuts, Nicky?" I asked.

"Remember what you told me a detective should do? All those things? And end up by putting the finger on the criminal! That's what Nicky was doing. He put the finger on him right in front of the truck!"

I didn't know how to answer him. To change the subject, I leaned over and picked up a jointed metal finger. It seemed undamaged. I said: "Don't feel too bad, Nicky. You can salvage a lot of this stuff for the next one."

His eyes hot, he snapped: "What do you think I am? A ghoul?"

Four days later Moe was officially cremated in a Pittsburgh blast furnace. Nicky didn't even ask me to go along.

Lucky Come Lately

PRO FOOTBALL AFTER PRO BASEBALL IS A HEAVY SCHEDULE FOR ANY MAN, AND YOUNG SOMETIMES WONDERED IF HIS LARGE SHARE OF GOOD FORTUNE WASN'T ABOUT USED UP.

by JOEL REEVE



There was a moment of stillness. Lucky stood on the forty-yard line of the enemy. The clock was running out.

LUCKY ANDY YOUNG sat in the office of the owners of the Mastodons, and listened. He was, for the first time in his life, exhausted, mentally and physically worn with combat. It was October, and the World Series had been tough. His part in it had been decisive; he had starred, but it had taken something out of him. He was twenty-seven, and a rookie to the football pros.

Dimly he was aware of hostility. Coach Potsy Carewe, the file-voiced, husky, square-jawed part-owner, was moving restlessly, staring at Les Glitter, who was doing the talking. Glitter was the bankroll of the club.

"We've already dropped a game to the Panthers," Les Glitter was saying. "The Chieftans, under that crook Pop Gorman, have an even chance of beating us. I figure we are out of the play-offs this year. But I have a plan." He was a youngish man, slightly bald, with piercing dark eyes and a nervous, irritable manner. He was a money-maker, a promoter, a shrewd operator, everyone said.

Potsy Carewe growled: "Take it easy, Les."

The dark eyes narrowed. "We paid Young plenty of money to sign. Then what happens? He gets into the Series with the Birds, and fails to report. We lose a ball game—"

"He couldn't have saved it," Carewe rasped.

"He wasn't there," said Glitter.

Lucky Young said wearily: "I told you that you could hold out my pay, prorated, for the time I lost."

"That's not the point," said Glitter sharply. "We're not drawing at the gate. Now that you're here, we're going to use you. I want that understood. You're a defensive man as well as a runner and kicker. In self-defense Potsy has been using a two-unit team, like all the rest. My idea is that we build you up as a sixty-minute player!"

Potsy said: "No man can play full games these days. Too many fresh men coming and going against him. Impossible."

Glitter said: "Young will do it. Or else."

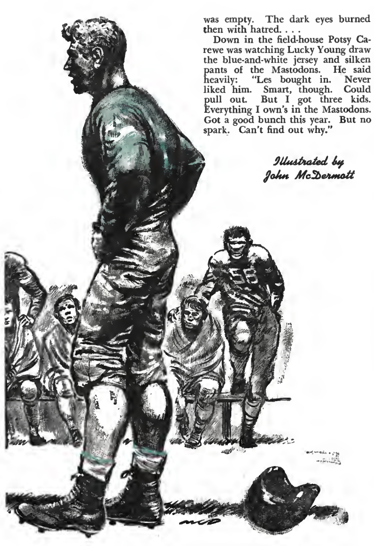
The threat stirred Lucky. He said mildly: "Or else what?"

Glitter shrugged. "There are ways of doing things. You'll be out of football. For good."

was empty. The dark eyes burned then with hatred. . . .

Down in the field-house Potsy Carewe was watching Lucky Young draw the blue-and-white jersey and silken pants of the Mastodons. He said heavily: "Les bought in. Never liked him. Smart, though. Could pull out. But I got three kids. Everything I own's in the Mastodons. Got a good bunch this year. But no spark. Can't find out why."

Illustrated by
John McDermott



Lucky looked at Potsy Carewe, that hard-bitten veteran. But the coach avoided the young man's gaze. Les Glitter owned fifty-one per cent of the Mastodon stock.

Glitter went on: "We can't win the Eastern Division championship. The Chieftans will win it. We can't get the play-off money. But we can draw, if we have an attraction. You'll be that attraction, Young. If you can make the grade, that is. If you can't —we'll soon get rid of you."

He turned away from them. He had a coldness that could shut them out as completely as though he had slammed a sound-proof door. He had the attitude of a man expecting argument, but scornful of anything opposing his own ideas. After a moment he turned around. The office

Lucky said: "I don't feel very sparkling myself, Coach."

"You've had the plays. Learn them?"

"I know the plays," said Lucky. "I know two assignments, blocking and running. But I'm tired."

Carewe nodded. "I know that. World Series. Clutch stuff . . . Lucky, I hate this. But Glitter's got me over a barrel. I owe him some dough. If I go against him—I'm out."

"I'm not letting you down," said Lucky. "I'll try." He put on the spangles. He should have been thrilled, he knew. It was his real love, this game, and the Mastodons were hoary with pro tradition. He should have danced with joy.

But there had been a war. He was no longer a curly-haired fresh-faced boy. He was twenty-seven, and he wanted to be married and have a home of his own, and children, and the things young men should possess. He thought of Alice Hale, back at Midstate College, helping her father run the school, and there was a lump in his throat.

There were men who loved Alice. There was John Fort, now coach of the powerful, wealthy Wolverines of the Western Division. There was Dud Jason, rich in his own right, greatest hitting outfielder since Ruth. There were undoubtedly others. Alice deserved the best. Andy Young wanted the best for her.

And they called him "Lucky." He smiled without humor, and went onto the field where the Mastodons were practicing, trying to find out why they did not click as they should.

They were stalwart, broken-nosed; a serious crew of giants. Swede Sorgerson, now starting center, uttered a great cry when he saw his old pal from Midstate. Fats Adelberg, now as then understudy for Swede, came lumbering with outstretched paw. Tipper Gregg, pass-catching end, another old team-mate; Don Marble, quarterback who remembered Lucky from the All-Star game; Hy Stelle, fleet running-back—all came with warm greetings. If some of the others did not gather in pleasure about him, they at least did not resent his coming. This was no malcontent crew, fighting among themselves.

This was a team slightly aged, with only the Midstate contingent fresh, and those boys no longer young and sophomoric. This was a veteran crew, one comprised of men who had been through campaigns both sporting and deadly, afield and at war. Somehow Potsy Carewe had not come up with fresh young meat from the new crop of college stars.

Potsy said diffidently: "Do it like this. Hy stays in. Dick splits with him at left half. Don and Poole split the quarterbacking as usual. Arden on offense, Borden on defense at fullback. Lucky takes over the other spot. Cash, you play utility."

Cash Carewe, brother of the coach, blinked. He said: "You mean Lucky plays full time?"

"That's it," snapped Potsy. He looked uncomfortable.

Swede said: "I smell a rat. And it ain't you, Potsy. The best Lucky can get out of this is one year, then blooie! It'll kill him!"

Don Marble, the smooth-faced, intelligent quarterback, said: "I smell the same rat and cheese in the bargain. This isn't fair, Coach."

The others who were listening, most of the squad, moved their feet, frowning. Lucky Young spoke quickly. "Listen, you nice guys. Stop worryin'

about me. It's damned swell of you." He choked for a moment in his weariness, knowing how decent it was of the pros to take his side, how selfless and warm-hearted were the big men. "Let's start worryin' about whether I'm goin' to do the team any good. I'll tell you one thing: For a gang like this, I'll knock out my brains. I'd never miss 'em, anyway!" He managed his wide grin.

People always responded to his grin. Swede chortled: "If you had any brains, you wouldn't be with us!"

Potsy, sighing his relief, snapped: "All right. Let's try it. Line up and get something in it. Young needs work. Not too rough, but work!"

THEY lined up. Don Marble, Hy Stelle and Kid Arden were as smooth as silk on offense. In the blocking position, Lucky ran with them. He got his initiation on the first play.

It was a fake buck, with Stelle going outside on a quick break. Lucky's task was to dump Luke Kenny, the end. Lucky went in, faked and slammed. A huge hand caught him, spun him. Lucky squirmed, made contact. Kenny tossed him five yards away.

Lucky came fighting back. Kenny said: "Whoa, boy. Play got by!" The block had been successful. But Kenny had never lost his feet. It was a lesson to Lucky. You made blocks differently in pro ball.

Later the line-up shifted. He was on defense, with Poole, Borden and Cash Carewe in the backfield. Poole called defensive signals from close up. Potsy had pulled Lucky back to defensive quarter, a position he had never before played.

Poole gave the pass sign. Hy Stelle was faking; then the ball came, like a bullet. It seemed to be going short, and Lucky started in for it. Then, too late, he realized that Stelle had laid steam behind it. Before he could back up, his old pal Tipper Gregg was in behind him, caught the ball, and was away for a score.

Lucky shook his head mournfully. It was not going to be easy, learning how the pros did it. Maybe his reflexes were not as good as of yore. He did not seem to have that sixth sense which had carried him through so beautifully in college—and even last year with the All Stars. He worried a little about that, going through the practice sessions all that first week.

That Sunday the Chieftans were coming. They were undefeated and seemed unlikely to suffer a loss in the East that season. Pop Gorman, long an enemy of Lucky and former mentor at Kings College, had an aggregation of swashbuckling veterans mixed with such new luminaries as Bud Layman, end of Notre Dame fame; Ted Tracey, young star tackle from Colorado, and Joe Bush, a guard of note from Utah. Owen Clancy, the fullback, was a huge youth who had played in the All Star game with Lucky and proved his worth. Pop Gorman, crooked and smart, had juggled his veterans in with the kids and made a tough gang of them. Their methods were slightly harsh, perhaps, but they overcame the penalties they received by sheer power plus the passing ability of Stub Ryan, a Texas product tough as a mustang, a little guy with a big arm.... They thought well of themselves—had spelled their name *Chieftan* instead of *Chieftain* in their sandlot days, and still pridefully kept it that way.

Lucky studied the Chieftan formations—they were familiar to him from the old days of Midstate College against Kings College, but with a difference. Expertness of the professionals gave wise old Gorman more leeway for his tricks. The work was hard and Lucky flogged himself to it.

On Friday he went to the station. His heart beat faster as the train came in; and when he saw the lithe, familiar figure he ran, bowling people aside, to seize Alice Hale in his arms and swing her off her feet. She was breathless, vibrant, lovely. Her tawny skin was flushed, her eyes bright with excitement.

He put her down, and the color faded in her cheeks. She said: "Andy! They're killing you! Then it's true!"

He said: "Who's been telling you what?" He held her bag in one hand, her elbow tightly in the other. They made a fine couple, going toward the cab-stand.

SHE said: "I had a note from Dud Jason. He heard, away out in Chicago, that you were getting a bad deal from the Mastodons."

"It's not a bad deal," he said. "If I hadn't played baseball and lucked into the Series, all would have been well. You look beautiful, darling."

"You look dead beat," she said flatly. "Oh, Andy, how long is this going on? You've got money—enough, anyway. Can't we just get married, like other young people? Can't we just?"

He said sternly: "Are you propositioning me, young lady?"

They got into the taxi, and she leaned hard against him for a moment, then straightened up. She said: "Andy Young, you've got to stop killing yourself to make a future for us. Your parents, your brother, your friends are worrying. I'm worrying."

He said patiently: "It's the old story, angel. I'm a tramp athlete. I've got this trick knee. One whack, and I may be out of competition for good. I must establish myself in sports, with a firm future. Our money will run out, you know, if I'm not working."

"You can come back and coach at Midstate," she pointed out.

"On your father's say-so," he said. "Bixby Mordant has never asked me to come back." He frowned. He had been wondering what Bixby Mordant was doing. That strange, wealthy gentleman had been the "angel" of Midstate College during Lucky's undergraduate days. Lucky knew Mordant had gone to Asia on some vague mission for the Government near the end of the war, but it seemed strange that no word had come from the pixie-like, rotund friend of earlier times.

Alice said: "Mr. Mordant is still on the Board of Trustees. But no one has heard from him in a year. Father fears he is dead. You can't have false pride about taking a job at your alma mater, Andy. It isn't sensible."

He said: "It's not pride. I don't know whether I *can* coach. I don't know anything about tomorrow." His face darkened. "I've been too busy keeping up with today."

"You're thin and drawn," she said gently. "It's too much. You try too hard. Why can't you just quit and come home and take over? Midstate needs you."

"There's a man in the job," said Lucky. "He has a contract. I have a contract of my own to fulfill. Besides, angel, I want better things for you than marriage with a college coach. I want a firm thing on which to base our marriage. I don't feel strong enough to handle the world the way I want it handled for you."

"I know." She sighed, holding his hand. Sometimes she wondered if the goodness of him was right, if it would not be better to be married and risk the rest. She wondered if it was a lack in her that she was unable to make him take her willy-nilly. But then she shook her head. She was a wise girl. She had known him since his freshman year. He had to do things in the way he considered right. She could not interfere with his integrity, swerve him from his chosen path; it would be a betrayal.

HE said: "I'll make it, baby. Somehow I'll pull it out. After the season I'll know. Then—" He wrapped a big arm about her. She lost her doubts when he did that.

They were dining in the hotel—Alice was staying with her cousin in a midtown apartment—but he wanted to show her off to the players who lived at his place. They noted a round-faced young man who sat near and stared at them, but paid him little heed. Lucky was a minor celebrity, even in the big city. Many people stared at him and at the sleek, slim girl who was his companion. They went on to a night-club at about

eleven, after Alice had met the Mastodons and fanned a bit with them.

They were awaiting the appearance of a pianist, one of their favorites, when the stout, pleasant-seeming man appeared again. He walked up to their table, bowed, and said: "I am Happy Case."

Lucky got to his feet. He said: "Oh-oh—this is Miss Hale, Happy."

Alice said: "Happy Case? The Thief of Halfbacks?"

Case sat down, chuckling. He had merry blue eyes, candid and clear. He wore expensive clothing and his fingernails were immaculately manicured. He said: "And I'm on the prowl. I know all about your troubles, Lucky."

There was real sympathy in the man's voice and Lucky could not shrug him off. He said: "I'm not interested, but thanks, anyway."

Case said: "Look, Lucky, the American Football Association is here to stay. We're gaining strength every year. There will be peace between us and your league before long. It's inevitable. But meantime we can offer you a far better deal than you're getting. You have a legitimate beef. Why, Glitter is advertising you to the hilt as a full-game man. That's impossible!"

Lucky said: "You sure do talk pretty, Happy."

The pleasant man grinned. "I can talk prettier. I can offer you ten thousand dollars for signing with the Beagles in our league. I can pay back to the Mastodons all they have advanced you. I can give you $105,000 for five years of football." He paused, then said honestly, "But you'll have to quit baseball. Ace Parker, Charley Trippi, Dixie Howell—those guys got hurt playing baseball, not football. You leave baseball alone and we'll talk about bonuses and a coaching job when you want to quit playing."

Alice Hale's eyes were round and bright. She said: "Whew! That's some offer to a twenty-seven-year-old man!"

Case said: "We know this guy."

There was a silence. The future lay, glittering with gold, on the table in front of Lucky Young's weary eyes. He only needed to look up at this kindly genie and nod his head. Marriage, security, even a modicum of fame was his.

Lucky Young's voice could scarcely be heard. "Jumping a contract, leaving one league for another, is bad for the game. You know it. I know it. Pro football can't stand it."

"We're fighting a war," said Case blandly. "Your league refuses our peace offers."

"I know that," said Lucky. "But I signed a contract. I'm a Mastodon." He raised his head. His voice became clearer. "There's something in that, too. Quit the team? I couldn't do that, Happy. Why—they are my guys!"



"You'll be that attraction, Young. If you can make the grade, that is. If you can't—we'll soon get rid of you."

Alice said: "Andy! Are you sure of this? Without thinking it over?"

He felt a sharpness in her. But he said, "I'm sorry, Happy."

The stout man said: "Sorry? Don't be sorry. You are quite a guy, Lucky. The Mastodons will kill you off. This will be your last year. And what about the Birds, when you report next spring, all beat up?" He got up from the table. He nodded, still smiling. "But you'll do it. You're that kind. I had to make you the offer. Will you shake hands?"

Lucky was surprised at the firmness of the stout man's grip. Case said: "You may not be money-smart, but you're all right." He went away.

Lucky sat down heavily. For once, the rhythm of the music did nothing for him. He was aware of Alice's strained attitude. He knew what he had done, he knew it well. But he could not see how he could have escaped. He felt trapped by circumstance; for the very first time in his life he felt beaten, discouraged. . . .

There were two tickets, box seats, for Dud Jason and Alice. The great Birds outfielder flew in on Saturday. He was aware of the strain between Alice and Lucky at once. He was Lucky's friend, but he was also in love with Alice. There is a place somewhere in every relationship where friendship does not stand in the way of a man's desires, Lucky well knew. The three were together Saturday night, and seemingly gay, but Lucky's nickname seemed to him ever more ironic as time went by.

Yet at game time he found himself tightening, his senses sharpening. The rasping, wise voice of Potsy Carewe rang in the clubhouse. "This team has not shown itself to be great —or even fairly good. You are all football players. I know that. But are you *men?*"

Les Glitter was there, owlish behind his glasses, staring at Lucky as though he were a prize bull to be entered in a country fair, hoping for prize money. The fans were coming, not in tens of thousands, but in greater quantity than before, still skeptical, but willing to learn if this new shot in the arm would revive the Mastodons. If Lucky came through, Glitter would realize on his investment.

He found opportunity to speak to Lucky. He said in his dry, almost unhuman voice: "I expect you to perform, Young. We are paying you a lot of money, you know."

Lucky started to tell him. He opened his mouth to say it, to throw in the mean-spirited man's face the offer he had turned down. Then he shrugged. It wasn't any use. Glitter would never believe it. Glitter was incapable of believing in anything but profits and losses.

Tipper Gregg, rangy, graceful, always a sensitive young man, elbowed Glitter aside. They walked onto the field together, then trotted to the bench. Lucky forgot about Glitter, about Dud Jason, about everything but the big, solemn bunch of footballers who were the Mastodons.

Gorman watched from across the field. His bald head bared to the October sun, he seemed searching for someone. Lucky saw him and knew that this would be a day. Gorman knew about the tricky knee Lucky had gained against Kings College in a collegiate game. Gorman had Rack Condor and Dandy Rue and others who would cheerfully tear off a man's leg to win a football game.

Potsy said: "Okay, guys—rock 'em and sock 'em." That was all. Tot Ames, acting captain, lost the toss. The Chieftans elected to receive, Borden, Farese and Poole went onto the ball-park gridiron in the backfield spots with Lucky Young.

He was loose down there, moving his legs to circulate the blood, watching Tot Ames tee up the ball. He

called in a low tone to his teammates, "Let's get started fast. Take it away from 'em."

They growled like bears up and down the thin line. They advanced and Tot booted the ball. Lucky trailed the play as the Mastodons charged under the kick.

Goldie Viscusi, the fleet big halfback, caught the kick on his one. He came tearing out and the blocking was terrific as the Chieftans formed. Goring was knocked out of play. Kenny got a blocker but went down. Right up the middle came Viscusi, to the twenty, the twenty-five. Lucky, traveling at top speed, saw Fats Adelberg destroy the last of the interferers and went in.

He hit low, from an angle, charging the flying Chieftan back. He was jarred to his heels by the impact, but his ready arms closed and he lifted Viscusi and rolled him as they went down. It was clean and decisive and Viscusi grunted. But the ball was on the twenty-eight.

The Chieftans used a mixed formation of the T and the single wing. Therefore it was difficult to set a defense against them. The Mastodons spread, then closed in as they learned which way their opponents would run. It called for fast thinking and quick motion. Viscusi ran with it for the tackle.

The lines came together with a loud thud. Butch Callow, Mastodon tackle, reeled out of the play, his nose bleeding. That would be Dandy Rue's fist.

LUCKY came from his deep backer-up position. The play was stopped ahead, but the Chieftans had gained six. They ran the other side, with Horse Malden carrying. They got their first down as two men worked on Kenny.

Lucky retreated grudgingly. There was dirty work up front. He could guess the story from the way the Mastodons were staggering after contact with the Chieftan linesmen. Stub Ryan brought his men into the T; then suddenly Lucky was retreating as the ends came downfield instead of blocking.

The flanker on the play stopped in the flat. Ryan, a short, ape-like man, ran a bullet pass over the struggling line. Lucky came in, but Viscusi had the ball and a blocker delayed the tackle. It became a first down on the Mastodon forty-yard line.

Lucky backed up. Gorman had his Chieftans in fine shape, he saw. The Mastodons simply could not stop the ground attack and the aerials could be set up by running tactics. He saw Ryan faking and ran toward his own goal.

Something hit him and drove him. A cunning hand twitched at his bum knee. Gorman had posted them all right. He looked down at Dandy Rue, the giant tackle, the scarred veteran.

He said: "Have fun, Rue. Your time's comin'."

"G'wan, you washed-up Rover Boy!" snarled the tackle. Lucky rolled over and shoved the bigger man away. Viscusi had caught the pass and was heading over the Mastodon goal line. The Chieftans had wasted no time in scoring. Rue swaggered down and booted the extra point.

TOT AMES and Lucky were the only ones who stayed on the field as the Mastodon offensive unit trotted on. The Chieftans matched the maneuver. Lucky frowned a little. He did not like this business of having two teams. If he had not been so dog-weary he would have loved playing full time. . . .

Rue kicked off. The ball went into the end zone. Hy Stelle elected to play it that way, although the blocking was good downfield. They went into action on the twenty-yard line.

Don Marble said gently: "All right, Twenty-two with Lucky. Right."

It was a sharp tackle slant from the single wing. The ball shot back and Lucky took it in motion right, then shifted into high and flung himself at the tackle hole. The strong side of the Mastodon line surged forward.

Lucky got into the hole. He was carrying the mail when the avalanche struck. A fist found his ear, an elbow dug into his ribs, a cleat narrowly missed his face and a hand clutched at his bad knee.

He protected his face and lay still, conserving his strength. He sneaked a glance at the sideline. He had gained seven yards.

Don Marble's voice lifted a little: "Twenty-two, right, Hy!"

Lucky faked taking it again, then swerved and threw a block on the tackle. It was Dandy Rue, coming in. Lucky got under the big man, used his shoulders. Rue, on defense, cut with his huge hands as though they were meat-cleavers. Lucky went down. Stelle, however, slid by and got the first down.

Marble chanted: "Got them goin'. . . . Forty, with the fakeroo."

On the thirty-one it was a real pro play. The fake was to Lucky, then to Hy Stelle. Then Marble completed his spin and without backing up threw the ball over the line. Kid Arden, the fullback, reached for it.

From nowhere came Viscusi, a great player. He leaped and the ball bobbled on his hand. Fate threw it to the left and Viscusi landed there with it. He held onto it, and although Arden slammed him down, it was Chieftan's ball on the Mastodon thirty-nine.

Marble went off the field, shaking his head. On came Poole, Borden and Company. Lucky rubbed his bruises. He went back and ranged the deep spot, awaiting the play. . . . He was aching, he was ready to drop with nerve exhaustion. He muttered to himself, moving to keep down the unrest within him.

The Chieftans rolled out with the T and began hacking at the line. Owen Clancy and Horse Malden romped and plunged and Mastodon linesmen bled. The juggernaut came down to the ten without halting.

Lucky moved up. He opened and closed his fists. Stub Ryan was chanting signals with a sneer in his voice. The great Viscusi ran at the tackle.

Lucky saw the end coming inside and took a chance. He left his position and followed the blocking. He went into the hole opened by the Chieftans. He met Viscusi. There was no chance to swerve, to fake. It was a head-on collision, the kind the pros avoid in their skill whenever possible. It was Lucky's misfortune to be forced to make it. He increased speed at the last moment, and a certain exultation was in him. He hit Viscusi full amidships.

The crash could be heard all over the big park. Smack at the line of scrimmage both men went into the air. They came down, and Lucky was wrapped around the Chieftan back like a boa constrictor.

They lay that way and even Dandy Rue stared in awe. Then one of them got up and said: "What is this, an Epworth League game? Let's get to work!"

VISCUSI did not respond. He did not get up. Lucky Young walked away and let him lie there. The Chieftans took time out.

Tot Ames stared at Lucky. He said: "You sure you're all right?"

The other Mastodons gathered around, nursing their bruises.

Lucky said clearly: "I don't intend being shoved around by a bunch of dirty footballers. While they're playin' dirty, why don't we play the game?"

Tot said: "But that tackle! Cheese, kid, you *are* tough."

"I'll show those dogs who is tough," snapped Lucky. His eyes were burning, sunk deep in his head. He was out of character, he dimly realized. He was a mild young man, a thoughtful athlete, a professional in his heart. His voice sounded a little shrill, very far away, as though someone else was talking.

Tot said: "Yeah—yeah, Lucky. I see whatcha mean." He spat on the hams he called his hands.

The Mastodons turned thoughtfully to the play. They bent to repel the attack. Viscusi was missing from



"I can give you $105,000 for five years of football. But you'll have to quit baseball."

the cast. On the sidelines Pop Gorman was waving his arms and screaming about fouls. Stub Ryan tried another line play.

Tot Ames and Fats Adelberg provided a small earthquake. Clancy, carrying for the Chieftans, was displaced from earth and hurtled in the direction of his own goal. He landed all askew and for a moment it seemed he too would depart. But Clancy managed to stay in the game.

Ryan, the rawhide little Texan, was snarling at his men. He called signals, tried a quarterback sneak. The world fell in on him. In three plays, the Chieftans had gained nothing at all.

Still sneering, Ryan called back Dandy Rue for a sure three-pointer. The Mastodons lined up on defense. The ball went back, Ryan touched it down, holding for the placement. Rue swung his leg.

Tot Ames leaped. His huge chest received the impact of the ball. He came down to earth and said: "Dandy, you're slowin' up. First time anyone ever blocked one on you, huh?"

RUE was livid with rage. He said something to Ryan, to Conder, the center. They walked away, squabbling among themselves.

The teams changed again. But Lucky stayed in. Even Tot Ames got a rest as Callow took over left tackle. But Lucky remained on the field, performing his minor miracles, saving the game a dozen times.

The half ended with the score still Chieftans 7, Mastodons 0.

The trainer looked at Lucky's knee. He said, " 'Tain't swoll much. Does it hurt?"

"It doesn't tickle. They've been workin' on it," said Lucky. Rue had punched him in the eye and it was blackened. He listened to Potsy pointing out mistakes the men had made, waiting for his name to be called.

Potsy was curt, accurate, as always. He wheeled and said: "That's all. Except maybe you noticed. Lucky hasn't pulled one."

Tot Ames rumbled: "Right. He don't make mistakes."

The others squirmed, but not in resentment. They looked over at Lucky and their faces were grim and thoughtful and bruised.

Lucky said: "We all make mistakes. But those murderers— I don't like them. I never did like Gorman."

Tot said: "Down on the goal line —that tackle of Viscusi. . . . You realize they haven't shoved us since you made that tackle?"

Lucky said: "They won't ever shove us around again. I don't like them!"

Tot said: "Me, I don't exactly love those guys. Look, Potsy. Don't take me out no more, 'less I'm crippled, you hear?"

Potsy started to speak but shut his mouth. For Field, Sorgerson, Roget, Bonzani, Cohen all were chiming in. "Yeah. Leave us in. Any of us. We ain't specialists. We made tackles in our lives. Hell, yes, Potsy, leave a team work as a unit once in a while."

THE Mastodons started for the field. In the hall Les Glitter came bustling up. "A very satisfactory gate," he said to Lucky. "But I prefer you star more on offense. Carry the ball oftener. You're not scintillating, you know. You've got to *do* something, Young."

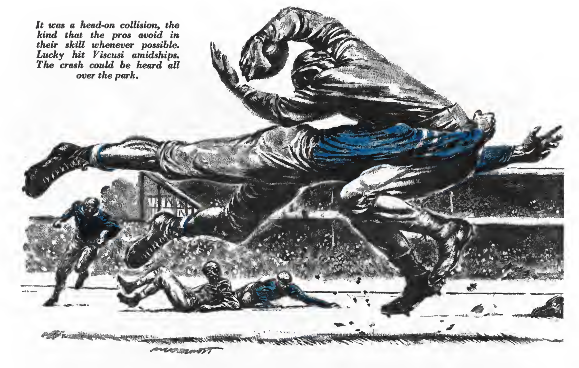
Lucky said, "Tell you what: I'll carry the water bucket this half!" He trotted away. The unrest grew in his soul. That was the man who owned more than half of the Mastodons. How could he be whole-hearted with the club?

The club was one thing, the team another, he told himself sternly, whipping his spirit. He went down and took the field. The Mastodons were aligned to receive the kick-off to begin the second half.

He looked over and saw Alice, then. She was small beside the looming bulk of Jud Jason. She was waving; just in case he saw her, he knew. He bit his lip and roamed the goal line, awaiting the kick. It was all crystallizing in this first pro game. He was beaten, he was weary and the Chieftans were dirty. The Mastodons had shown nothing on offense. He felt hampered, tied down.

The ball came. It was toppling from the air toward Don Marble. Lucky broke into motion and called, "I got it, Don. Move up!"

It was a head-on collision, the kind that the pros avoid in their skill whenever possible. Lucky hit Viscusi amidships. The crash could be heard all over the park.



Marble, quick and clever, delayed, then shot out from under the ball at the last possible instant to throw a block on a Chieftan end. Lucky, traveling in the opposite direction at full stride, took the ball as though it were a long fly to center field. Without interrupting an iota of his speed, he set sail for the sideline.

The Chieftans, expecting a funnel-drive as usual, were slightly reversed at the start. Recovering at once, they headed gleefully to block off the return by this upstart rookie. They came in droves, cutting him off at the imaginary cross roads.

Then arose the Mastodons. There came a series of loud and insistent sounds. Bodies clashed, big brawny bodies. Men seemed to explode in all directions. Chieftans rolled on the sward, gasping. The Mastodons were cleaning up.

Lucky criss-crossed away from the small squad which lay for him. He slammed to the center of the field at the forty-yard line and picked up Tipper Gregg. Alongside Tipper loomed Tot Ames. They ran awhile and then there were more Chieftans.

Tot said: "Lemme have this first pair." He hurled his large frame athwart two of the tacklers. There was a sound like thunder. Tot parlayed them into wreckage strewing the midfield stripe.

Tipper said: "I got Clancy. Then it's yours, pal."

Lucky watched his old friend nail the Chieftan fullback to the ground. There was a choice: should he hit the sideline again or try for the whole hog?

Stub Ryan was the obstacle. The Texan was warily playing it safe, knowing Lucky had to come to him. The Chieftan twenty-yard line was underfoot. Lucky changed direction again.

He was speeding straight at Stub. The short Texan braced himself for the shock. Lucky was bigger and traveling fast. Ryan dug in cleats.

Lucky came down on him. Then Lucky trailed a leg. Ryan, committing himself, dived. Lucky put a hand almost gently on Stub's head-guard and pivoted. Stub's pugnacious nose hit the dirt.

LUCKY ran over the goal line. The end zone was directly beneath the clubhouse window. He stared up and saw Les Glitter looking from the window. He touched down the ball, hauled it back, and hurled it upward upon an impulse he could not have repressed for a million dollars.

The ball clanked off Glitter's dome and landed back on the field. Lucky called, "Is that showy enough for you, you blood-sucker?" He wheeled and went back to place in the line-up for the conversion without awaiting reply.

Tot Ames was limping from his colossal blocking effort. Tipper Gregg said, "Let Lucky boot it. He never misses."

Tot said: "Hey, that's right. You boot it, Lucky."

So Lucky, with a strange hand holding, kicked his first pro goal. It split the uprights and almost went again into the clubhouse window.

Ames said: "Hey, that woulda been good from the forty!"

Lucky said: "Of course, pal. . . . C'mon, let's hold these muggs and get the ball again." His weariness was a thing he had accepted now. He put it in the back of his consciousness. He went into the game, backing up the play as the Chieftan attack roared again, with Viscusi returned to the fray.

He was in on the wing, now. Marble was remaining in. Hy Stelle, the fleet runner, was back in the quarterback rôle. Potsy made a couple of changes in the line and sent Cash in for Kid Arden, but the Mastodons were playing as a team.

The Chieftans flung their best plays and their finest punches. They were doing well at midfield when the referee finally caught them.

The penalty was what broke that attack. They kicked. The Mastodons punted back, Lucky getting off a sixty-yard boot. The game rumbled between the twenty-yard lines and the fourth quarter came around and was almost gone and the score stood 7 to 7.

A tie was no good, Lucky kept saying. He was about ready to drop, but he kept repeating that a tie favored the Chieftans because they had not lost a game and the Mastodons had lost to the Panthers. He lurked, ready at all times to take a hand. He stopped Viscusi cold again and sent him from the game for good.

And suddenly it was the Mastodons' ball on their twenty. Marble was calling a number. Like awakening from a half-dream, Lucky heard his name. It was a plunge play. Lucky



took the ball and went in. There was a moment when the hole closed up.

He backed, changing stride automatically. He backed two steps, looking for another way through. He saw Tipper Gregg in the flat, eyes wide. Instinctively he raised his arm. Don Marble had been doing the passing—this was his first pro attempt. He whipped the ball at Tipper, knowing his schoolmate of old, knowing his swift reflexes. It was one play the Chieftans couldn't have scouted, he thought as he pegged the ball . . . because there wasn't any such.

Tipper nabbed the sailing pigskin in big hands. Wheeling, he ran without blockers for a good ten yards. The referee called it the thirty-five-yard line.

Marble muttered: "I'll be damned! Run it on the spinner, Lucky, right."

They came out, single wing, and the Mastodons shoved. Lucky got into the hole this time. He cut over and butted Clancy in the face. He ran away from Malden and Ryan got him only after he passed midfield.

But Ryan could hit. He hammered Lucky to earth and Dandy Rue was there to pile on. A fist and a knee clanged into him and Lucky went out, down a deep, deep well. . . .

They were throwing water on him. He got up mumbling. Potsy was asking him the down, the day, his name. He answered and then he said, "I can boot it. I can't run, but I can boot it."

They paid no attention to him. They sent Kid Arden into the line. The Chieftans, fighting now like a pack of angry dogs, held for no gain. Marble tried a reverse. Stelle got four yards. Then the Chieftans really rose and on a fine spinner. Marble himself only made two.

Lucky was doing nothing, he was well aware. He was dazed and weak. It was fourth down and he kept saying, "I can boot it."

Tot Ames rumbled, "Let 'im."

Marble said, "It's a hell of a spot to put him on. He ought to be out. He did the work of two men."

"Hell, I love the guy," said Tot. "Let 'im."

So they lined up. Lucky took off his headguard. He felt smothered. A breeze came down. He sniffed it gratefully, swinging his leg. The Chieftans stood staring at him. On the sideline Gorman was dancing and raving, "Block that kick! I'll fine every one of you if you don't block that kick!"

Marble knelt, looking up at Lucky. The Mastodons girded themselves and lined up. There was a moment of stillness. Lucky stood on the forty-yard line of the enemy, the breeze ruffling his blond, crisp hair. The clock was running out.

The center pass was perfection; Marble's hands were like a surgeon's, turning the laces of the ball toward the goal, delicately placing it on end. Lucky took a half-step, then a full one. His right leg swung. His chin was down, his eyes grave upon the ball. His follow-through was perfect, his head did not come up after contact. He said to Marble, "I sure pushed that one!"

The ball went up and up as Chieftans leaped and missed. It went high and then started to come down. It dropped like a plummet and the staring, taut face of Les Glitter followed it from the window.

The umpire knelt, squinting. The ball turned end over end. It landed square on the end zone back line.

The official leaped, raising his hands in a wide, generous gesture. Down the field Lucky said: "Yep, I sure shoved it. Was it good, Don?"

Marble was shouting at the sideline. They came and led Lucky away. They tenderly took him into the dressing-room and stretched him out there, the trainer and Tipper Gregg and Marble.

Lucky said: "It was good, huh?"

They said: "Good? It was perfect. The game'll be over in two plays."

"Fine," said Lucky. "The boys sure came through today!" He turned on his side.

The trainer lifted his head. He said: "Holy commotion! This guy's asleep!"

In their favorite bar, Dud Jason slew a steak and drank beer. He said, "Lucky, you're set. Glitter doesn't know what to do. Potsy won't play you a full game again. I had words with them both. Funny, they listened to me."

Alice looked at the big, stern-faced, rugged star baseball player. She said, "People always listen to you, Jud. You should be a politician."

"I should be dead before I take what your boy friend took this afternoon." Jason watched Lucky destroy his steak. Lucky had the blackened eye, but otherwise he was calm, relaxed, with color in his cheeks. "How do you do it?"

Lucky said, "I managed to sleep in the dressing-room. Those good guys, the Mastodons, tiptoed around like kittens, Potsy said afterward. The sleep cleared my mind. . . . And I learned something. I learned that you sent Happy Case after me. That you wanted to help and thought that was a way out for me."

"Er—I happen to know Case—" Jason seemed embarrassed.

"I also found out about your constant efforts on my behalf," grinned Lucky, "in the matter of our girl here. Jud, what would people do without their pals?"

The big man said: "Well—well, dammit. If I can't have her myself, I want you to have her!"

"And quick!" said Alice firmly.

"Soon," amended Lucky. "I'll get it all squared away. With the help of my good friends. I had a wire from Bixby Mordant today, Alice. . . . He's alive, he's coming back and the job at Midstate is mine next year if we want it."

Alice said: "You're going to take it?"

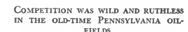
Lucky shook his head. "I'm a Mastodon right now, a Bird in the spring. I'm a physiological freak . . . and I love it."

Jason said: "You've proved your point. Why don't you settle down and collect the things life should bring you?"

"In time," said Lucky. "Right now we've beaten the Chieftans, but there are still the play-offs . . . and we'll be in them . . . against John Fort's Wolverines." There was a glow in his blue eyes. "All right, Alice. We'll be married, soon. But the Wolverines—we must beat them!"

"He's not a man, he's an athlete," said Jason disgustedly.

But Alice was holding his hand, quite openly. She understood, and truth to tell, so did Dud Jason, that fierce competitor. There were things to be done. There were enemies to be confounded, gallant deeds to perform. . . . Lucky smiled sleepily at them and was thoroughly happy.



COMPETITION WAS WILD AND RUTHLESS IN THE OLD-TIME PENNSYLVANIA OIL-FIELDS.



by HARRY BOTSFORD

MAL WRIGHT was one of the best of the oil scouts. His services always commanded a premium, and they were in steady demand. He crouched over a small fire and considered these facts with satisfaction. Ten feet away, his blanketed horse was tethered to a scrub oak. The horse stamped impatiently against the penetrating blast of a January wind that howled down the little valley.

Wright peered through the dusk at the drilling derrick silhouetted blackly and bleakly against the winter sky. Lazy blue smoke curled from the boiler stack, and steam spurted in white puffs from the busy little engine. The walking-beam swung endlessly up and down. The drilling crew had just lighted the derrick lamps, and they shed a golden flickering light that stretched from the boiler to the derrick floor. Wright drew the heavy horse blanket closer to him, mentally computed the depth the drill had penetrated, and estimated that another six to ten screws would bring the drill into the pay sand, if any.

What would happen then depended on a number of things: If the well started an obvious flow, his job would be easy. He'd jump on his horse, ride to Pleasantville and report to his boss. However, if the well didn't flow, he'd have to crawl cautiously through the snow to a point where he could examine the sand pumpings brought up by the bailer. A single handful would give him the precise knowledge he wanted: whether the well would be a producer or not. Part of Mal Wright's skill was in the fact that he could make an accurate appraisal of the potential worth of a well by sniffing, tasting and feeling a single handful of the sand pumpings brought up from the bottom of the well by the bailer. Crawling through the snow, inching his way stealthily to the vicinity of the derrick was something else in which he had experience.

But the drilling crew knew they were being scouted, and they would be on the alert. Also, they had shotguns. Signs on the Porter Farm proclaimed that trespassers could expect to find themselves on the wrong end of a dose of bird-shot. This, Wright knew, was no idle threat. He already carried a lot of bird-shot on his person, and he was anxious to avoid any additions.

The driller, Lime Gillett, was an ancient enemy. Also he was a good shot. He'd like nothing better than a chance to pepper Mal Wright for the third time in four years. The feud between drillers and oil scouts was perpetual. In this instance it was also personal.

Wright unmittened his right hand, found a plug of eating tobacco in his overcoat pocket, worried off a generous chew and restoked the fire. Well, being pinked with bird-shot was just one of the hazards of his business, he reasoned. Right now, he might as well rest for a couple of hours. It would take about that time for the drilling crew to reach the Third Sand, according to his calculations. The wind had died down; the heat from the fire was comforting. He eased off his heavy leather boots and let the fire warm his cold feet, pulled the blanket snugly around him and dozed off.

After ten minutes, the man who had been watching him from behind the shelter of a clump of small hemlocks, emerged and grinned widely. Lime Gillett was a dour man, not given to casual smiles. But this was a special occasion. He held in his mittened hand a long willow pole to which was attached a fishing line and a big hook. He approached carefully, his felt boots making no noise in the snow. Deftly he swung the rod, manipulated the line and hook until the hook engaged in one of the boots. He swung the rod up and brought the boot into the air and within reach of his hands. He chuckled quietly, weighed the virtue of pilfering the other boot and then discarded the idea, nice as it was. He departed, carrying the boot proudly.

Oil Scouts *at* Large

At the derrick, Tom Cannon, the tool-dresser, looked down approvingly from the driller's stool and paused momentarily from fanning out screw. He grinned as Gillett took the boot and spiked it to the headache post, and then stepped back and admired it as a big-game hunter would admire the head of a prize tiger on the wall of an ornate trophy-room. Silently the two men shook hands.

"I think we're gonna hit the sand in another screw," Cannon predicted. "You can smell a little gas right now." Gillett leaned over the casing head, sniffed and agreed. His sensitive hands clasped the cold temper screw, and it told him the nature of the formation the drill was hammering at a thousand feet below the surface. He nodded gravely. "She's hittin' outcroppin's right now," he said. He knew. It was his business to know. He was one of the best drillers and wildcatters in the business. Cannon, an experienced hand, at once drenched the fire in the forge, moved the derrick lamps out on the runway, eliminating possible hazards against an explosion if the well suddenly started to flow.

An hour later Mal Wright awakened with a start. He heard a subdued roar from the drilling well, saw the drilling crew frantically engaged in trying to cap a flowing well. This was what he had waited for; he reached for his boots, tugged on the right one, reached for the left boot and suddenly realized that it was gone. He swore mightily, tossed some dry wood on the fire. In the light of the flames he saw the tracks made by Gillett. He shrugged, tore the blanket from the waiting horse, mounted and tore down the lane toward the main road to Pleasantville. In less than five minutes the left foot was numb with cold. It was below zero. The galloping horse passed snug farmhouses; there were warm and friendly lights in the windows, but he never hesitated. The sorrel horse never paused in its headlong gallop over the snowy road. Down the long road from the Porter Farm to Bean Farm, up the hill to the stretch leading to Pleasantville, the wild pace continued.

The horse slid to a stop in front of the Eagle House. Its breath steamed in the still air, and its flanks heaved with fatigue. Wright slid from the saddle, tried to take a step and fell flat on his face. The left leg was completely numb. A man helped him to his feet. "Help me to Jake Gorman's room, will you?" Wright asked politely. "Then take my horse to Dutton's livery stable and have him rubbed down and put under double blankets. When he's cooled off, I want him to have a good feed of oats and properly bedded down. Here's a five-spot for your trouble."

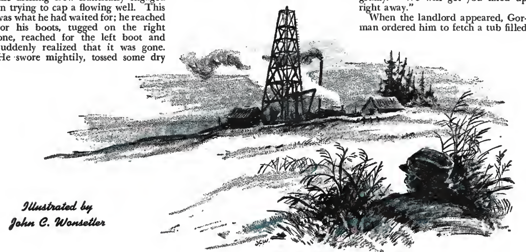
Gorman was a fat man, with twinkling blue eyes and a luxuriant brown beard. He was an oil producer who was more than successful, who had used every device to attain that stature and to hold it. He leaned back in a heavily cushioned chair, puffed calmly on a large pipe as he listened to Wright's report.

Then almost casually, he lifted his voice: "Okay, boys, get going! Lease every acre of land within two miles of the Porter Farm—pay money as a bonus if you have to—but get the names on the dotted line. Wake people up, flash money in their faces, get them signed up before they are fully awake."

Three booted and grinning men emerged from the adjoining room. Their pockets were bulging with blank lease-forms, and they carried small leather bags filled with gold and greenbacks fastened to their belts. They noisily clumped down the stairs, and in less than a minute Wright and Gorman heard them gallop off in the cold night, headed for the Porter farm sector.

Wright's face was twisted in pain; the frozen foot was giving him the devil. Gorman went to the door and roared for the immediate presence of the hotel owner. He came back, filled a tumbler with amber Allegheny rye and handed it to Mal Wright. "Put that inside you, Mal," he said gruffly. "We will get you fixed up right away."

When the landlord appeared, Gorman ordered him to fetch a tub filled



Illustrated by John C. Wonsetler

with snow. "Get it up here quietly," he commanded. "Then get old Doc Shuggert up here as fast as you can. Keep your mouth shut! Understand?"

An hour later, his left foot still in the tub of snow, Wright was on his third tumbler of rye. Doc Shuggert fingered his sideburns speculatively and shook his head. "Mister, I'm afraid you'll lose some toes before this is over," he predicted.

Wright nodded gloomily and sipped more rye. Then he grinned. Gorman had ordered a thick steak for him, and it had just arrived, flanked by fried potatoes, a platter of hot biscuits and a pot of hot coffee.



They plotted their revenge in secret.

DOCTOR SHUGGERT was right. The oil scout did lose four toes, limping badly from that time on. No one ever heard him complain or utter threats about Lime Gillett. He was one of the great oil scouts of his time. His name was almost a legend in the Pennsylvania oil fields for many years. Lime Gillett kept the boot he had snared, always nailed it to the headache post of every drilling rig on which he worked. It was a trophy of which he was inordinately proud. But Mal Wright was the one who really won. Gorman's riders had fulfilled their mission; before daylight they had leased hundreds of acres of farmland near the Porter Farm. Before noon, Gorman had a string of teams headed toward the area, bringing in drilling equipment, drilling crews and rig builders. He had, as usual, outwitted competition. Within a month he had drilled in three moderate gushers, sensed that the field might quickly exhaust itself, sold out for four hundred thousand dollars. He pensioned Mal Wright generously.

Oil scouting was, at the best, a hazardous occupation. With hundreds of wildcat wells being drilled, shrewd oil producers could not afford to not keep fully informed as to what was happening at key drilling wells. Most of them acquired a retinue of oil scouts, as did Gorman. If the news happened to be good, they rushed in and leased as much land adjacent to the well as possible. If they worked fast, they would profit in a most handsome manner.

The advent of the oil exchanges gave scouting a new importance. Scouting then became a fine art and widely practiced. Pipe lines had largely displaced barges and teams for the transportation of crude oil from where it was produced to where it was refined. As separate handling of various lots of oil shipped through the pipe lines became more difficult to handle, the pipe-line carriers added storage to their functions. The oil was held in storage for the producer until such time as he disposed of it, the pipe-line company issuing to the producer a credit balance sheet, a slip of paper that was readily negotiable at a sum usually based on the current price of crude oil per barrel.

In an effort to bring about stabilization of the price structure, oil exchanges were established in various oil towns where the balance sheets could be bought and sold. The intent was economically sound, but in actual practice, wild speculation ensued, price shifts were erratic and unpredictable. Millions of barrels of crude oil represented by credit balance sheets, changed hands daily in the oil exchanges of Oil City, Titusville, Bradford, Pittsburgh and New York. In one decade, 1871-1881, the price of crude oil ranged from $4.83 a barrel to fifty cents a barrel.

Oil producers tore their hair; they might start to drill a well when oil commanded a price of four dollars a barrel; by the time the well was drilled, the price might be down to 50 cents a barrel. Refiners lived precariously. Because of a shortage of oil in their own stock tanks, they might be forced to fill them with $3.50 crude. The next week, the price might drop to a dollar. If their competitors filled their stock tanks with the dollar oil, they were in a position to undersell the refiners who had been forced to buy $3.50 crude. It sounds like economic chaos. It was.

Survival often hinged on producers and refiners battling it out on the floor of the oil exchanges. Into this surrealistic economic pattern the oil scouts fitted neatly. If a speculator had advance news of a new gusher that might open a lush field and flood the market, he could go into the oil exchange, sell short and make a for-





tune in a few hours. If a promising wildcat well came in a duster, the market was bound to surge upward. Men with advance news flourished and their bank accounts grew apace.

The telegraph was nearly new and the speculators found it most useful. Many remote offices were established and wires strung to them. The scout who reached the wires first could flash good or bad news quickly to employers in oil-exchange towns. Many of the speculators were untroubled by any scruples. Telegraph operators in Oil City and Titusville were bribed. When good or bad news came over the wires, the speculators got it at least an hour before the message was delivered to the individual for whom it was intended. In the meantime, the market would have been carefully rigged.

One speculator learned the telegraph code, loafed in the telegraph office and read every message that came through. He, in turn, dramatically turned the tables on his competitors.

It was an era of give-and-take. No quarter was asked or given. Outsmarting one another became an occupational affair, carried on with great industry and in rare good humor by all concerned. Honest men were virtually helpless unless they were blessed with supreme good fortune—which wasn't often. They realized this and they didn't like it.

A group of honest but indignant oil producers who had been forced into the oil exchanges decided to do something about it. They developed a code for their trusted oil scouts to use. For a time, the code worked magnificently. Others might hear or even see the code, but they couldn't know what it meant. Each oil scout was given a number with which he signed his messages. They knew the exact area where each scout was located. If the telegraphic message tersely said "INCIPIENT DOGGEREL," the group knew that a gusher had been drilled in—and where. They forthwith went to the oil exchange and sold short. When the news broke, they cleaned up. If the message was a curt "SAPIENT LEMMINGS," they had been informed that a well expected to come in as a gusher was in reality a duster. Again, they converged on the exchange, bought at the market and smilingly waited for the news to become known. Honest men, they assured themselves, could always prosper in a world where rascality was rampant. And they did prosper—exceedingly. Then disaster smote them.

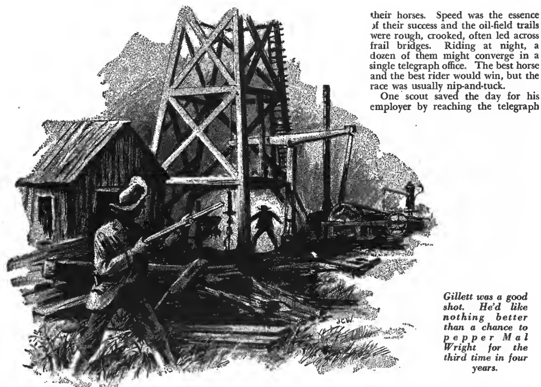
THE competitors had broken the code. They acted with dispatch and shrewdness. They tapped the telegraph wires leading into Oil City. Messages were intercepted and delayed unless they proved harmless. They knew a certain scout was watching a wildcat well at Cash Up. If this well came as a gusher, the market would break badly, for it would open up a new and large oil field. The telegraph wire eventually clicked out a laconic "INCIPIENT DOGGEREL." A man leaped on a horse, galloped headlong to the office of the speculators with the gladsome news. Within minutes, seven men were on the floor of the exchange quietly selling short. It was a large operation and thousands of barrels of oil were involved. Within thirty minutes, the little group of honest men received a message from the telegraph office.

"SAPIENT LEMMINGS" it read. They grinned and went forth for the kill. They bought for a rise in the market, laid their last dollars on the line. The market jumped up and down erratically until the true news broke. The market sagged so sharply that before the day was over, crude oil was selling for sixty cents a barrel. The honest oil producers who had turned to speculation were wiped out. Virtue didn't always win, they confessed.

I once knew one of this group. He confessed to me that he had been one of the victims of "INCIPIENT DOGGEREL" and had gone broke. "For years," he told me a little wryly, "when a man took a financial beating, he was reminded that maybe he had been a victim of 'INCIPIENT DOGGEREL.' It was a long time before we found out what had happened to us." He grinned broadly. "We refused to take our beating lying down. It took a bit of figuring, but we eventually evened the score with the tricksters."

They plotted their revenge in secret. It took them over a year to put it across. In the meantime, the oil exchanges had closed. The tricksters, well-heeled, had become oil producers. The honest men bought a small farm at Shamburg and announced that they were going to drill a wildcat well on the premises, the area being completely undeveloped. Before they made the announcement, they quietly leased every farm for a mile away from the test well. The well was well scouted. The syndicate that had ruined the honest producers were represented by three scouts, working in relays. Eventually, the drill reached the pay-sand depth and the assembled scouts saw a sudden flow of oil roll over the casing head and across the meadow before the drilling crew capped the well. They rode away to the nearest telegraph office to pass on the news that a new gusher had been drilled and a new oil field opened.

The next morning, the owners of the well were besieged with offers for their property and the land they had under lease. The wicked syndicate bid briskly against all competition.



Gillett was a good shot. He'd like nothing better than a chance to pepper Mal Wright for the third time in four years.

their horses. Speed was the essence of their success and the oil-field trails were rough, crooked, often led across frail bridges. Riding at night, a dozen of them might converge in a single telegraph office. The best horse and the best rider would win, but the race was usually nip-and-tuck.

One scout saved the day for his employer by reaching the telegraph office just three minutes before his rivals. The news was big and even a grace of three minutes would not be enough to enable the employer to profit by the news. His rivals fretted while his message was being sent, quarreled about whose turn would be next. When his message was sent, the scout jerked a hammer from under his coat and smashed the telegraph instrument. He came out of the ensuing battle with a broken nose and a cauliflower ear. But, he enabled his employer to make a killing on the Bradford oil exchange. He richly earned the substantial bonus he received.

Mike O'Hanley was the tail man in one mad race for the telegraph office at Red Hot. His horse was slow-footed. He knew he was outdistanced and he acted swiftly. He stopped his horse, climbed a telegraph pole, cut the wires, then took off over the hills to the telegraph office at Miller Farm and sent his message to his employer at Pithole City. The resultant killing so delighted the boss that he endowed O'Hanley with a saloon and that reckless Irishman promptly drank himself to death.

The price soared into the upper brackets. When it reached the sum of $245,000, the owners accepted the cash from the syndicate representative and signed the transfer papers. They had promised nothing; the new owners had bought the property solely on the report of their scout, on the obvious trace of oil soaking into the meadow, and on the air-tight leases on the surrounding property.

When the syndicate examined the drilling well, the air became filled with assorted and fervent profanity. There was a large barn located within a hundred feet of the alleged producing well. In the barn they found a fifty-barrel tank that had once been filled with crude oil. Leading from the tank was a pipe, carefully buried, that ended at the casing head of the well. When the trap was ready to spring, all the honest oil producers had to do was to open a valve and let the oil escape under the derrick while the drilling crew went through the motions of capping the well. It was, broadly speaking, an entirely honest operation, entirely within the law. The syndicate knew it. There had been no obvious fraud. They had bought a package, sight unseen. They had no recourse.

Did I say virtue always triumphs? That honest men are bound to prosper?

"We divided our loot, and were very happy about the project," my grizzled friend told me. "The syndicate, stuck with several hundred acres of leased land, decided to shoot a few thousand dollars in drilling some test wells. They wanted a final peek at the hole card, bless their wicked hearts! The second well they drilled started to flow at the rate of 500 barrels a day. As it turned out, they really made a darned good investment. It's one story that has a happy ending for all concerned. We got back what we had lost; they opened a rich and profitable oil field and made barrels of money. A sort of a combination of 'Incipient doggerel' and 'Sapient lemmings,' you might say."

The oil scouts were a robust crew. They were daring, courageous and filled with ingenuity. They were, above all things, supremely honest. A few of them died wealthy. Many of them died of what was once called lung fever, what we now call pneumonia. Crawling along in the snow to get a peek at sand pumpings in the dead of winter, waiting long hours in cold, driving rains, isn't entirely healthy. Not one of them, according to reliable testimony, ever died of lead poisoning, but many of them did carry a lot of bird-shot on their person. A few were killed in falls from

NEWS became a precious commodity in the oil fields. If you had it while it was reasonably fresh, you could make a lot of money on it. A few

fantastic things happened. William Rawbridge, a New Yorker, came to Titusville with a pot of ready money and the determination to multiply his capital within the shortest possible time.

The walls between the rooms of the American House were paper thin. One night Rawbridge heard three men talking in the adjoining room. He had nothing else to do, so he listened. They were discussing an obscure wildcat well being drilled on Church Run, scheduled to reach the pay sand that night. One man said: "I don't know your scout, Hitchcross, from a hole in the ground. He don't know me, either! You fellows wait for me down in Cassidy's saloon. When I hear from the scout, I'll get in touch with you if the well is a good one. Be ready to move. Tell the scout I'm in Room 65."

Two of the men left and William Rawbridge thought some long thoughts and wrestled with his conscience and lost every fall. Then he quietly left his room, went to a livery stable and hired a good saddle horse which he tethered back of the American House. Then he visited a hardware store and bought a small screwdriver.

Back in his room, he removed his boots, went into the hall and removed a couple of room number plates and exchanged them. His room temporarily became No. 65. Two hours later, boots clattered on the stairs and a man unceremoniously opened the door. "I'm Hitchcross!" he said tensely. Rawbridge cautioned him to speak in a whisper. The wildcat was a gusher, the scout reported, a big one, too. Rawbridge accepted the news, gave the man fifty dollars. "People probably know you were scouting that well," he said. "Don't leave this room until morning. Here's a quart of prime rye. Drink your fill and go to sleep. I have work to do."

In the hall, he again removed his boots, quietly replaced the number plates, strolled down stairs and out the back door, mounted his horse and headed for Church Run. Before daylight, he'd secured leases on ten adjacent farms, close to the gusher. For his enterprise, he netted a small fortune within three weeks and wisely headed back for New York City.

The men who hired Hitchcross accused him of crookedness. This, he denied. He had given his message to the man in Room 65, he stated flatly. They pointed out that he had been found asleep in Room 66. They were all puzzled until Rawbridge sent Hitchcross a whopping big check from New York. Only the check, no comment aside from a cryptic "A 25-cent screwdriver is a great invention." Then and there, Hitchcross understood what had happened.

The oil industry lost a lot of its glamour and drama when circumstances eliminated the fraternity of oil scouts. The scout went out of the picture when they no longer drilled gushers in the Pennsylvania oil fields, but he exists today wherever wildcat wells are being drilled. He has discarded a horse for a car or a personal plane. He may have his own shortwave sending set instead of depending on the old-fashioned telegraph. He performs, however, precisely the same function as did the old timers.

What he does, whatever tricks he employs, he can probably tell his own tales of high adventure. I suspect that none of them will surpass what happened in the stirring days when "Incipient doggerel" was not just a meaningless phrase, but a clarion cry for action on the double-quick.

THE GALLANT RIDE

THERE is a very good chance that you never heard of Frank Hayes. He participated in only two horse-races and he won only one of these, his last one. But there never has been a win quite like it in all the history of turfdom and it is unlikely that there ever will be another. It was the climax of a gallant ride made one day, a quarter of a century ago. . . .

Frank Hayes was a kid who lived in Brooklyn. For four years he had been an exercise-boy. He took out horses in the morning and saw that their legs were properly limbered up.

But the kid from Brooklyn wanted to be a jockey; to wear a splendiferous uniform and to hear the roar of the crowd in his ears as he came flying down the track. Finally his boss, James K. Frayling, gave him a chance. Frank rode a horse in a Havre de Grace race.

Apparently, he didn't impress anyone too much. Months went by and he wasn't given another jockey rôle. He became, once more, just another exercise-boy.

But the Brooklyn boy had his sights on something: the Belmont Steeplechase. More than anything else in the world he wanted to ride in that race and win it.

Mr. Frayling shook his head. A steeplechase race was a grinding, hazardous proposition. Frank didn't have the experience.

But Frank kept on talking to Mr. Frayling about it. He told him that all his life his Number One dream had been to win the steeplechase, that he'd given it all he had, that he'd die happy if only he could be given the chance.

Mr. Frayling said, well, anyway, Frank weighed too much. He weighed 140 pounds and 130 was the limit. Frank said he'd get his weight down. Mr. Frayling said there was too short a time for Frank to reduce his weight that much. The kid from Brooklyn said he could do it all right.

Every day Frank worked out hard, sweating away, to get his weight down. Finally Mr. Frayling said all right, he could be in the race. It didn't look as if Mr. Frayling's horse, Sweet Kiss, had a chance to win anyway. J. S. Casden's Gimme was the odds-on favorite.

And from the very beginning of the race, to nobody's great surprise, Gimme was up there in the front. But there was a horse that stayed right along with the highly-touted steed—and this horse was Sweet Kiss.

Then, after the last hurdle had been taken, Sweet Kiss pulled away from the favorite. But no sooner had Mr. Frayling's horse taken a commanding position in the stretch than there was a peculiar occurrence. Sweet Kiss momentarily seemed to have lost his bearing. He swayed uncertainly—as if he were slightly punchy, maybe. It looked as if Gimme was going to take over after all. But almost as suddenly as he had faltered—or whatever that had been—Sweet Kiss straightened out, regained his stride and swept across the finish-line ahead of the others.

Only he didn't stop and turn, as is customary. He kept on going . . . until the jockey slowly slithered down his shank and slid into the dust.

The kid from Brooklyn was dead.

The doctors thought that his reducing efforts, plus the great strain of the perilous run, had weakened his heart. Apparently he had kept going, despite his rapidly failing heart, until he had brought his horse out in front, and then had collapsed.

And so a dead man—though one with a very gallant spirit—had won the race. But it had taken a very gallant horse too; a horse that had caught the driving will to win, and had carried on with Death riding in the saddle.

The rule was that jockeys must weigh in after a race before their horses could be declared winners. But the judges waived this long-time concept of racing procedure, saying that there were some things that were "above rules"—and declared Sweet Kiss the official winner.

Although most of the money had ridden on Gimme, there were no squawks. Crowds can be gallant too.

—by HAROLD HELFER

The Quiet Hour

A MOVING DRAMA BY THE AUTHOR OF "SHRIKE" AND "ANOTHER MAN'S FACE."

by WILLIAM BRANDON

GEORGE left the subway at Sheridan Square and walked a crosstown block to the Quiet Hour. The first snow of the winter was falling in the streets, a light white veil upon the steel gray evening. The Quiet Hour was a bar and restaurant in a cellar. A neon sign at the entrance displayed a winking bedtime candle in tremulous red and yellow. George went down the steps, through the bar and dining-room to a closet in which were mops and brooms and a pile of soiled linen. He hung his hat and coat on a nail in the closet wall. He transferred a short-barreled revolver from his top-coat to his jacket pocket. He came out again to the dining-room.

The place was warm with steam heat and the smell of hot food and moist plates. There were candles on the checkered tables. Murals of sleeping nymphs and piping Pans were painted on the walls. There was a small piano backed against the partition between the dining-room and the bar. A half-dozen people were seated at tables in the restaurant, and perhaps twice as many crowded in the ell of the bar. Joseph, the owner and manager and headwaiter, limped among the tables with a great burden of covered dishes on a tray.

George straightened his necktie and cuffs and went into the bar. A girl dressed in drab clothes, but quite pretty, seated at the far end of the bar, said gayly, "Hello, George," and George said briefly, "Hi!" The girl's hair was as yellow as butter, and brushed until it sparkled. Her eyes were blue, very clear and direct and composed. She wore an old green suède coat in the manner of a cape across her shoulders. The bartender handed a drink of whisky to George without speaking. George's hand was trembling. The whisky splashed over the edge of the thick little glass and ran in oily drops down George's fingers. George threw his head back and drank quickly. He wiped his hand on his jacket. He left the bar and walked through the dining-room to the kitchen.

The cook said: "Ho, George." The cook was a round little man in a sweat-soaked undershirt and dirty white trousers. He sat on a wooden table, idly swinging his diminutive feet at scampering cockroaches, while he smoked a long Russian cigarette with a gold tip. "We got a good piece of beef tonight. Cut yourself some of the rare."

George took a plate and helped himself to vegetables from the pots in the steam table. He poked at the beef with a carving knife. He said: "It looks very fine, Alex."

"You got the shakes again," the cook said. He hopped down from the table and took the knife and carved several slices of the beef. He said earnestly, "You ought to knock off the liquor, George. You ought to get smart. You're a kid yet. You ain't old enough to be a whisky-head. You got a lot on the ball. The world could be your little apple. Did Joseph show you that piece in the paper?"

"No."

"The guy gives you a big plug. There'll be some mob want to listen to you tonight, on account of it, I'll bet you." The cook deftly placed the slices of beef on George's plate. "Look at them juices! You like it really rare, hey? Right here, this is really rare. Now don't put no sauce of any kind on this beef." The cook knocked ash from his long cigarette. His head, round as an orange, came to George's elbow. He said: "You want more, you come back. That is roast beef melts in the mouth. You see."



"Your religion's in a bottle."

George went out to the dining-room and put his plate on a corner table. The table was covered with a blue-and-white checkered cloth, and two white napkins, folded into cones, were placed at opposite corners. A candle in a tarnished brass stick iced with milky drippings was surrounded by jars of spices and sauces. George set the napkins aside. He got himself a cup of coffee and a knife and fork and sat down at the table.

THE blonde girl with the green suède coat thrown over her shoulders immediately came out of the bar and sat down at his table. She was carrying a drink in a stem glass.

"Hello," George said. He went on with his dinner.

"I'm going to a party," the blonde girl said. She drank from her glass. She screened her eyes in the fringe of their lashes and smiled. She said: "How late do you have to work tonight, George?"

"Pretty late."

She held the slender glass before her face and hummed a little tune. She peered through the glass at the flame of the candle. She struck negligently at the candle with her red-nailed fingers and made the flame lean this way and that. She said: "Would you like to hear a poem? I wrote a poem today, sort of about you."

George chuckled. He said: "Sure."

"You don't need to be sarcastic. I'm not asking you to get with Greenwich Village. I'm just talking. It's just killing time."

"You're a nice kid, Helen," George said, amused. "Tell me the poem."

Her eyes were warm with indignation, but a childlike warmth. She was very young.



There has to be a reason for a pianist of his ability playing in a place like this—where he can watch the door.

She said: "I'm not a kid. I'm as old as you are. I don't think I'm trying to be of the art, arty—and what's wrong with taking something seriously? I know you think it's against your religion, because your religion's in a bottle."

"Come on," George said. "Tell me the poem."

"You've made me mad." She sipped from her glass, holding it in both hands. "Will you be through working by midnight, George?"

"Depends on business."

"Will you go to the party with me after you're through?"

"Better not."

"Do you mean you'd better not go to the party with me, or what?"

"Or what."

Her white teeth caught at her lower lip in a moment of speculation, and then she burst out laughing.

She said: "I will let you hear the first line. It goes: '*You've got to get up early in the spring to hear the bobolink sing.*'" She turned her head a trifle and gave him a sidewise look, full of merriment. "You like?"

"Real cool," George said.

"Ah, you're sweet."

George smiled and went on eating.

She said: "That reminds me, I've got a t.l. for you." She rummaged in her pocket and brought out a newspaper clipping. "Have you seen it? It was in the night-club column in the *Dispatch* today. It says: 'A visiting piano virtuoso sneaked out of Carnegie Hall the other night to go down to Greenwich Village and get a listen at a young man who is displaying the most terrific keyboard technique since Franz Liszt, or so the longhair rumor has it. The Wunderkind's name is George Kirk, and the place is the Quiet Hour, a restaurant on Waverly Place. Strictly concert caliber, and why it's sold nightly for coffee and cakes in a cellar club, only George Kirk and the concert managers can say.' How about that?"

George shrugged.

"Now you'll get another uptown offer," Helen said. "And you'll drink yourself out of it again before you can sign your name. I could tell this guy why it's sold nightly for coffee and cakes."

"Why?" George asked innocently.

"Because you're a lush. Because you're so much wrapped up with the serious business of drinking yourself to death no one will take a chance on you, as soon as they see what the score is." Her voice quivered. She became faintly embarrassed, and then drew in her cheeks and almost smiled, as if in droll appraisal of her own embarrassment. She said: "But I don't see why I should knock myself out about it. But I would like to know why. I wish I did know about you."

"There's nothing to know."

"Pooh! You've been here for weeks, and no one knows anything about you. You're going to be the leading character of Waverly Place just because no one knows anything about you."

George smiled. He said: "Well, ask me something."

She held the tip of her tongue between her teeth, her eyes aslant in grave reflection. She said: "All right. Did you ever know John Cooper?"

George sat still for a moment, his head bent, his hands unmoving. He said at last: "I've heard the name."

"He was twelve years old in 1937, when he went to France to study with Caudillo," Helen said. "I saw his picture in an old music magazine a few days ago. He was a piano prodigy, but his parents had decided not to let him enter concerts. He wanted to study composition. Of course, a twelve-year-old boy can look like anyone, but he looked remarkably like you."

He asked suddenly: "Are you trying to throw me a curve?"

She shook her head. Her teeth caught at her lip. "I'm nothing but what I seem to be: I'm just a girl that lives around the corner; you've taken me to the movies twice, and I've hung around here more than a nice girl should, to listen to you play; and I want to help you, if you want me to. That's all."

George said nothing.

"Other people are curious too," Helen said. "Like that newspaper columnist. Somebody else is going to remember John Cooper too, sooner or later."

"He's dead," George said. He returned to his meal. He ate in silence for a time. He said: "He didn't get out of France when the war started. His parents were there too, and they were killed by a Stuka. During the German occupation he took part in the French resistance movement, with his teacher, Caudillo. Caudillo was a Spaniard, but a French patriot. He was a tall man with a gray face and white hair; he was a fine musician—the Nazis were in awe of him. He and John Cooper both joined the Underground, and worked with it for two years. When John Cooper was seventeen and eighteen, he thought Caudillo was God. When John Cooper was nineteen, he was in love with a girl named Clare. She was a year or two older. He didn't realize until later that Caudillo also desired Clare, and that Clare had refused him. Clare and John Cooper went together on a mission that involved crossing the Spanish border, and they were betrayed by the only person who could have betrayed them. They were trapped at the border. They tried to hide in the mountains. They separated. They were fired on. John Cooper was shot through the body. He was taken to a Spanish prison hospital, and when he was conscious again he was questioned."

George went on softly:

"When he didn't answer questions, they showed him a blood-soaked dress. It was Clare's."

THERE was a silence.

The girl said: "And then he died?"

"Yes."

"And Caudillo?"

"He disappeared after the liberation. He had been revealed as a collaborationist spy, and the French wanted to try him, but they couldn't find him. There was a rumor that he was in Spain, and then in South America, and then in Mexico, and then there was a rumor that he had illegally entered the United States and was in New York."

"But no one knows where he is in New York," Helen said thoughtfully. "But regardless of what he has done, music is still the strongest compulsion of his life, and if a pianist excites unusual interest, sooner or later Caudillo will come to hear him, won't he? And of course he knows John Cooper is dead, doesn't he?"

"Yes. He tried to escape, and he was killed. He fell off a cliff in the mountains, and his body was never recovered."

"And who is George Kirk?"

He raised his head and gave her a blank look.

"Nobody in particular," he said.

"I suppose he went from Spain to Mexico too, before he came to New York? And of course there has to be a reason for a pianist of his ability playing in a place like this, where he can watch the door and see anyone who comes in, and it's the best of reasons if he's alcoholic. All that whisky the bartender keeps giving you, I suppose then it's cut, because although you act drunk, you'd want to stay sober?"

He didn't smile. He said: "Yes. I give him my own bottle."

"What are you going to do, George, when he does come in?"

GEORGE looked at her unseeingly, without answering.

She said: "Have you thought that it's better to leave the dead alone?"

"He'll come," George said.

"I don't mean that."

"That piece in the paper will bring him."

Two lines of a frown broke between her brows. She said: "George, you're wrong. I mean, you're wrong to live for this. It's an evil search. Wouldn't it be better to look for John Cooper than for Caudillo?"

"You said you'd help me."

"I will—if you want me to."

"Then forget John Cooper." He got up from the table and carried his plate into the kitchen, and returned after a few minutes with another slice of the roast beef. Helen was still at his table, turning the empty glass in her fingers. She stood up as soon as he sat down.

She said: "Please don't work tonight, George."

She stood looking down at him earnestly. The wineglass was empty. She held it tilted to one side in her hands, like a tiny parasol.

George mopped up his plate with a piece of bread.

A shiver ran through her. She said: "Please come to the party, George." The green coat slid off her shoulders and she caught it and held it over her arm. She was wearing a dress of some jersey stuff that lay in many tiny wrinkles upon the lines of her thin young body. She watched his eyes. Her red lips twisted in a rather harsh little smile. She said in a strained voice: "Come on, George. Come and have some fun."

"I've had it," George said.

She looked at him a moment longer and then jerked back her head, to toss a strand of hair off her forehead, and turned around and walked with rapid steps into the bar.

Joseph, an old man stooped behind an enormous blue-veined nose, made his way on tired feet past George's table and twisted one side of his face in a grotesque burlesque of a wink.

George finished his dinner and carried the dishes into the kitchen. He returned, smoking a cigarette, to straighten up the table he had used, replace the napkins in their original positions, and brush off the checkered tablecloth. The other tables in the restaurant were now filled, and the people sitting at them and standing in the entrance to the bar watched George's movements as if he were some curiosity on display in a zoo. He went into the ell of the bar and stood there a moment, smoking, apparently unconscious of the silent people watching him from the dining-room and the bar. He was long-boned and rangy. His face was angular. His hair was the color of sand. He was dressed in a shabby blue serge suit and a dark shirt. Helen had gone; she was not in the bar.

When the barman had a free moment, he handed George a small glass of whisky. George drank it, put the shot glass on the bar, ground out his cigarette, and walked around the partition to the miniature piano. As if at a signal, the people at the tables and at the bar began to talk and eat and drink, unconsciously shamming inattention, while their eyes watched covertly.

The piano was painted a bright orange. It was very small. George stood beside it, glancing through a litter of music on its top.

He drew out the bench and sat down and ran his muscular hands softly over the keys, and at once the talk and clatter stopped and the people stopped their breath and listened.

He began the first movement of the Sonata appassionata. The back of his threadbare blue serge coat swayed from side to side as he played. His eyes were on a level with the top of the piano. He could look across it and watch the people at the tables in the restaurant, and beyond, the crowd at the entrance to the bar and the row of listeners perched on stools before the bar. He could see the street door and, when it opened, the snow-covered basement steps outside, glittering bright orange in the reflection of the neon candle.

The music was spun like glimmering threads. The little piano became not an instrument of sound but of implication and evocation that stole like dreams into the silent room. When the ripples were stirred to turbulence subtlety was shed, and the impact of his feeling burst like thunder, an impact of towering force and majesty, incredible from the absurd little piano.

AS the movement ended, Joseph came up behind him from the kitchen. The people clapped their hands, and George played a melodic bagatelle, lively and gentle and unobtrusive. Joseph stood listening at his shoulder.

He wore a glistening alpaca coat and his eyes were pale blue, like two drops of skimmed milk.

Joseph said in a Delancey Street voice: "You count the house, kid? They can't all get in."

George grinned and continued playing.

"Only thing is they don't eat. They don't do nothing but listen," Joseph said. "I got to put on a cover charge. You see the piece in the paper today?"

George nodded.

"You're in like Flynn, kid. The guy wrote that piece talked to me last night. He says what's the gimmick? What's wrong with the guy? Ain't nothing wrong with the kid, I says. He's a doll, I says. He's a good boy, I says. Yeah, the guy says, I seen him take sixteen shots whisky while I catch his act. He's a lush, ain't he? No, that's a lie, I says."

George let the music die away. He laughed. He said: "It doesn't make any difference."

"This is a good time to knock off the stuff," Joseph said.

"Maybe I will, after the next one," George said.

JOSEPH sighed. He turned and caught the eye of the young Italian waiter. The waiter went to the bar, and came back in a moment with a small glass of whisky on a round metal tray. George took it and drank. The crowd in the dining-room watched with a strange, avid interest.

"This one's for the double-domes," George said. He played a set of Schönberg variations, strikingly dissonant, a brilliant technical structure flung up by the leaping magic of his hands, clanging girder upon girder, strange, disturbing music clashing at the iron mask of the inexpressible.

Joseph went away. The street door opened and closed as more people came in. The bar was crowded now with people standing, and only the one corner of the doorway could be seen past their motionless heads and shoulders.

The music stopped. The sudden silence was startling. George stood up, and the bench fell over.

He moved to the entrance of the bar. The people crowded there pressed back, their faces frightened.

A tall white-haired man had just entered. He stood inside the door, unwrapping a muffler from his throat. Flakes of snow flew from the muffler, sparkling in the light. He was thin and somehow ungainly, and his face was big-boned and cadaverous. His hands dropped, the muffler half unwound, as the people pushed away from before him. He saw George standing at the entrance to the bar, a dozen feet away. The skin of the old man's face became the color of mud, but his eyes were invisible, set deep



The old man's face became the color of mud, but he did not move.

beneath shaggy white brows. He said nothing and did not move.

George dropped his hand into his pocket and brought out the short-barreled revolver, and a woman came in from the street door and stood at the old man's elbow while her eyes grew round and her mouth opened slowly. Her black hair was parted in the middle and drawn back in two rolls over her ears. Snow was dusted across it. She wore a cheap cloth coat. Her lips were red with heavy rouge. She was neither young nor old. Her arms and legs were thin, but her hands were white and plump. Suddenly she screamed.

Someone leaped up from a table and shouted something; a chair fell over; and Joseph ran to George's side like a dancing clown, stoop-shouldered, hobbling, breathing through his monstrous nose, and took the little gun from George's hand. The woman was still screaming. The street door slammed open, and the people walked on each other's feet, scuttling sidewise, moving in idiotic circles, crowding to the door, jabbering at each other and gazing upon George with frightened eyes.

Joseph pulled at George's sleeve. The old man and the woman had disappeared into the street, carried with the crowd.

George turned and let Joseph lead him back toward the kitchen. He saw Helen sitting at a table in the corner, near the kitchen doors. Her face was white. Her eyes searched his.

He stopped beside her chair.

She said: "The police will get them. I called the police after you told me. They said they'd send someone to watch."

"It's all right," George said.

"I was afraid. I couldn't let you do it."

The people in the dining-room, still standing here and there behind George's back, watched him with fascination.

Joseph stepped into the center of the room and raised his arms and said loudly: "Everything's all right. Everybody sit down." He gestured to the bar with an outflung arm and shouted to the young waiter: "Stop letting these free-loaders get out without paying their checks."

Helen extended her fingers and touched George's hand. She said: "I wanted to stop you, but I couldn't move. I thought the detective the police had sent would be here, but he must have stayed outside. But I prayed John Cooper would stop you."

George drew out a chair and sat down. He breathed deeply.

The girl said: "He did, didn't he?"

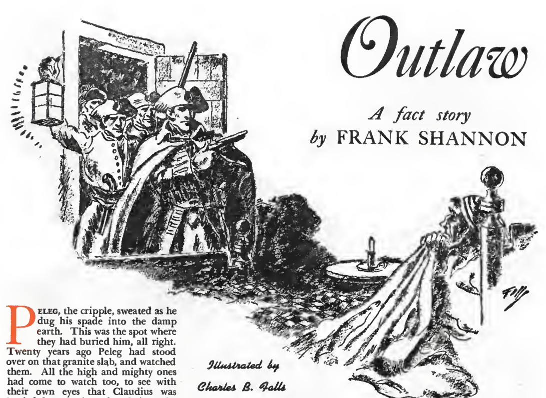
"No," George said. "There was a woman with Caudillo. Did you see her?"

Helen looked at him intently. She said: "The one who screamed?"

"That was Clare," George said.

Outlaw

A fact story
by FRANK SHANNON



Illustrated by
Charles B. Falls

PELEG, the cripple, sweated as he dug his spade into the damp earth. This was the spot where they had buried him, all right. Twenty years ago Peleg had stood over on that granite slab, and watched them. All the high and mighty ones had come to watch too, to see with their own eyes that Claudius was buried deep; so deep that their cattle, horses, gold and jewels would be safe at last; that they could sleep without fear of the drumming of muffled hoofs that rode through the night.

Peleg shivered a little and took another swig from the demijohn. He was a man of iron nerve, and there was courage in the raw whisky; but in spite of that, the small clouds skimming swiftly across the moon threw bushes and trees into weird attitudes. If only that damned owl would stop screeching! He uncovered the feet. This was it. No rotted leather encased them. In a frenzy he threw dirt in the air, caring nothing for the rattle of the pebbles on the surrounding gravestones. Clenched teeth hissed curses at the lucky accident responsible for this mad scheme.

The day before, Peleg had taken a shortcut through the cemetery. Because of his clubbed foot, he grudged every unnecessary step. He was a knife-maker, and a good one; but since the war, orders had been few and far between. Whisky was hard to come by. His clothes were shabby. As he leaned heavily on his cane, the damp earth gave way beneath it and Peleg sprawled full length across the grave of Claudius Smith. Only the polished knob of the cane protruded from the ground. As he lay there cursing, the great scheme was born.

Here were bones, bones for the taking! He had been casting about for material for his knife-handles. He would come back that night with a sack and a shovel. People would pay a good price for a knife with a handle made from a bone of the notorious outlaw. Around their fires at night they scared the hearts out of the kids with stories of the blood-curdling escapades of the Smith gang. Besides, there were the silver buttons.

Peleg counted the silver buttons. Seventeen. He had counted them at the hanging. He put them into his pocket, heaved the sack over the edge, and scrambled out of the hole.

This gruesome scene might have taken place on Boot Hill outside some cowtown or mining-camp in the wild and woolly West—Carson City, Dodge City, or Deadwood—but it didn't.

It happened in the effete East, right on the doorstep of New York City. The cemetery was the Presbyterian churchyard in Goshen, New York; the year, 1800; long before Sutter's gold discovery or the Sante Fe trail were to provide novelists and movie-script writers with the hair-raising exploits of Jesse James, the Dalton boys, Billy the Kid, Sam Bass, Belle Star and the rest of them, as colorful legendary background for "Western" stories and movies. Indeed, it is the painful duty of this writer to point out that such well-publicized bad men as the Daltons, the Youngers and others of their kind sedulously copycatted the exploits of a much more original and versatile New Yorker, Claudius Smith.

Claudius not only originated the pattern; he lived all the "Western" horse-operas you ever thrilled to, rolled into one: Cattle-rustler, horse-thief, highwayman, pay-roll bandit and jail-breaker, he was pursued by many a sheriff's posse; he carried off a maiden to his cabin in the woods; he buried a yet-to-be-found treasure; he stole from the rich and gave to the poor—and failed to die with his boots on only because he wanted to make a liar out of his own mother.

The indisputable proof of his existence as "The First American Outlaw," lies in the barred and guarded manuscript vault of the New York Public Library, at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue. You may see it if you obtain permission from the director, through whose courtesy the story is reproduced here. Discovered recently, after having been lost to historians for more than a hundred and fifty years, the "Calendar of the Decrees and Manifestos of George Clinton, first Governor of New York"

of the Wild East

Picturesque People — V

is a sheaf of yellowed documents, frayed at the edges, which have never seen print.

Written by hand, sealed, almost undecipherable, they tell the story of a newly established State, all but penniless, trying to cope with pressing civil problems in time of revolution, under a constitution without legal, historical or governmental precedent.

The sixtieth decree in order of issuance, dated October 31st, 1778, was this:

"Whereas many murders and robberies bave been lately perpetrated within this state to the Great Terror of the inhabitants thereof which are charged to be committed by the several persons hereinafter named or some of them. In order therefore as far as possible to prevent such atrocious crimes for the future and cause the offenders to be apprehended and brought to justice, the Honorable Senate and Assembly of this state by their concurrent resolution of the 27th. and 20th. instant have authorized and requested me to issue a proclamation offering certain rewards for apprehending the several persons hereinafter mentioned. Now therefore in pursuance of the said resolution I hereby proclaim and offer a reward of $1200.00 to such person or persons as shall apprehend and secure the body of Claudius Smith, also $600.00 each for Richard Smith, etc."

George Clinton, Esquire
Governor-General and Commander-in-chief of all the Military and Admiral of the Navy of the same.

This was the first "Reward Notice," prototype of the handbills now a "must" on the set of every Western. I was doing research on an entirely different subject when I read it for the first time. Its significance did not hit me at once, but when it did, I realized that I had made a very interesting discovery. With it as a clue, I was off on a fascinating manhunt, the search that was to raise the ghost of the First American Outlaw from its burial-place in old diaries, letters, newspapers and court records. In the end, the assorted bits, pieced together, gave a fairly complete picture of the real man. I shall present it to you, not in the romantic imagery of the historical novelist, but in the documented facts as quoted directly from the writings of his contemporaries and the cool judgment of those who wrote of him a few years after his death.

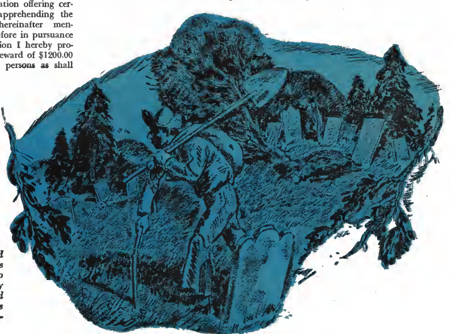
It is impossible to trace his ancestry, because genealogists of the period disavowed his connection with any of the God - and - Government - fearing Smiths suburban to New York City. His father left Smithtown, Long Island, sometime before the Revolutionary War, to settle in the fertile Ramapo Valley, on the sunset side of the mountains that overshadow West Point.

Claudius' first essay into crime was abetted by the elder Smith, who helped to scrape identifying initials from some steel wedges the boy had stolen; but his mother warned:

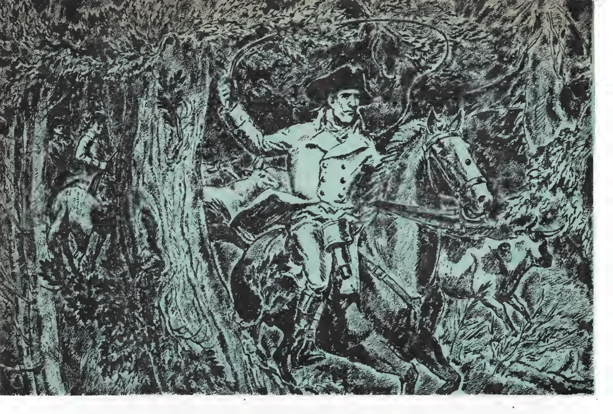
"Claudius! You will die like a trooper's horse—with your shoes on."

Their domestic life was far from tranquil, according to Abigail Letts, a meddlesome spinster of the period, who paints an unhappy picture:

"The father of C. was a bad man; cross, self-willed and abusive. Becoming blind before his death, he



As Peleg leaned heavily on his cane, the damp earth gave way and he sprawled full length across the grave of Claudius Smith.



The gang's chief source of revenue was cattle-rustling. Stolen cows were sold to the British for gold.

would strike Mrs. Smith with his cane, and had been known to move around the room in pursuit of her, for this purpose. These disturbances the neighbors quelled."

Without detailing the various movements of the Revolutionary War, it is necessary for the purposes of our story to point out that control of the Hudson Valley, from New York to Montreal, was the most vital strategic factor in the success or failure of the rebellion. Its loss would have cut the Colonies in two. Lord North knew it. Washington, to whose astuteness, historians do not always give credit, knew it. That is why he allowed Philadelphia, the Capital, to be taken, rather than endanger this lifeline by retreating to the more tenable mountain positions to the north after the battle of Long Island.

With the British occupying New York City, Washington's perimeter of defense was a semicircle from Connecticut to the coast of New Jersey, with fortified West Point for a keystone. The rich farm and cattle country between the American and British lines, the neutral ground, was soon infested with foraging parties from both sides, seeking fodder for their horses and cattle to feed their men. Redcoats raided the homes of patriots; Colonials, the farms of Tories.

Claudius Smith, and the band he organized, like Quantrell's Raiders of the Civil War, knew no loyalty to either side. In the dead of night, with blackened faces, they descended on Tories and Patriots alike in lightning forays, then vanished like wraiths. The hills back of Bear Mountain made ideal hideouts.

As a contemporary, in typically long sentences, puts it:

> The make of the country furnished great facilities for the gang of rogues to issue forth, prowl abroad during the night, commit all kinds of depredations, and then retreat in safety to hide themselves in the deep glens and inaccessihle fastness of the mountains.
>
> Smith's Clove nourished many infamous rascals who were guilty of all kinds of bad deeds from theft to murder; but the foremost in daring wickedness was Claudius Smith, the oldest and most daring villain of them all—the leader of the gang—a man of huge stature and powerful nerve; of keen penetration; a man upon whom nature had hestowed abilities worthy of a better cause. He conducted his expeditions with such cautiousness as scarcely ever to be suspected until on the very execution of them; and if a sudden descent was made upon them, by some bold stroke or wily maneuver, he would successfully evade his pursuers and escape.

The Ramapo Road, an important military highway between Philadelphia and Washington's headquarters at Newburgh (now New Jersey route 2 and New York 17, through Tuxedo and Monroe) soon became so unsafe that only a well-armed convoy had any chance of arriving at its destination. The traveler on foot or stagecoach was invariably confronted by a huge cloaked figure and relieved of his valuables.

One of Claudius' most daring exploits was the ambuscade of a heavily guarded baggage train en route to the Colonial Army encamped at Newburgh. The entire train, loaded with supplies, muskets and pewter, plus General Ward, Muster Master, carrying the payroll for the troops, was carried off into the mountains.

Soon after this, an English officer, posting the forbidden road by coach, was relieved of a valuable silver stand and a gold watch. Claudius subsequently presented the watch to the Mayor of New York.

Treasure-hunters discovered the muskets some years after the war; but

the silver stand, pewter and the rest of Claudius' treasure is still sought by natives to whom the tradition has come down.

The gang's chief source of revenue was cattle-rustling. Stolen cows driven through the Suffern gap to the British lines were sold for gold. The Colonials could pay only in worthless Continental currency.

On one of these expeditions its leader was surrounded and taken; as this entry in the proceedings of the Council of Safety, July 18, 1777, shows:

"Ordered that the Sheriff Dumont cause to be removed from the jail in Kingston to the jail in Orange County, Claudius Smith and John Brown charged with stealing oxen belonging to the Continent."

The gang, led by his three sons, Richard, James and William, "not as accomplished and capable, yet as desperate in wickedness as himself," swept down on the jail and rescued their chief.

LIKE the Western outlaws who came after him, Claudius had a keen eye for good horseflesh. If a horse caught his fancy, he made no bones about his determination to annex it.

Colonel Woodhull, commanding officer of the Orange County Militia, "owned an excellent and well-favored mare that Claudius gave out he intended to steal. Knowing the desperate character of the man and his ability to accomplish what he purposed, Woodhull had her brought from her stable and tethered in the cellar."

Claudius lurked in the vicinity of the Colonel's estate for three full weeks. At last opportunity came. Guests arrived. Claudius bided his time until, according to the Colonel's custom, they went upstairs for tea. The outlaw stepped in, jumped on the mare's back and bounded into the yard, laughingly calling to the Colonel to come see the last of his mare. One of the guests rushed to the window with a pistol, but the Colonel struck up his arm, saying: "If you shoot and miss, he will kill me."

At a later date Claudius repaid this courtesy by sparing the Colonel's life.

A contemporary tells us that:

"The poor man found him a friend, ready to share both his meal and his purse; and much of what he extracted from the wealthy, he bestowed upon the indigent."

Instance the case of Colonel McLaughery:

When the British, by a clever stratagem, stormed and destroyed Fort Montgomery, a strong outer bastion of West Point, the captured were taken to New York City's Sugar House Prison. There, under infamous Provost Marshal Cunningham (a notorious character who anticipated the starvation-torture technique of the Nazi prisoner of war camps by a century and a half), they faced the prospect of freezing and starvation for the duration of the war, unless they could purchase food and fuel at exorbitant prices. Colonel McLaughery wrote home to his wife for funds. She applied to Abimal Youngs for the loan of some "hard money." Youngs, a miserly man of means, refused.

Word came to Claudius (through his efficient information grapevine) that Mrs. McLaughery had pawned her shoe-buckles to raise ready cash.

Justly incensed at Mr. Young's niggardly conduct, Claudius called upon him and politely requested that he reveal the whereabouts of his hoard. On his understandable reluctance to do so, Abimal found himself trussed to the hoisting-pole of his well, raised some twenty feet in the air, then plunged into the icy water. After this gentle treatment was repeated four or five times, Abimal proved more amenable. Claudius and his merry men rode off with the funds necessary to make the Colonel's imprisonment less irksome—plus a bundle of deeds, bonds and mortgages, whose disappearance enabled several householders to sleep more comfortably at night.

Many other instances of the sort, well verified, prove that Claudius passed on a Robin Hood heritage of outlawry too often disregarded, with the notable exception of Jesse James. According to the ballad:

> Jesse stole from the rich and gave to the poor
> He had a heart and a hand and a brain.

The crime that led to Claudius' downfall, though there is no evidence that he was present at its commission, was the murder of Major Strong, who for some reason had incurred the enmity of the gang. A newspaper account describes it:

> When they came to the house at about twelve-o'clock at night, he was abed. They broke open a panel in the door of the inner room in which the Major lodged. He being alarmed, entered with a pair of pistols and a gun. His assailants called that if he deliver his arms he would be given quarter. He set down his gun and went to open the door, and they sent two balls through him.

The countryside was so incensed at the killing of the popular Major that they appealed to Governor Clinton, who posted a reward of twelve hundred dollars on the head of Claudius and six hundred dollars on each of his sons. Claudius fled to a hideout in his boyhood home of Smithtown.

Comfortably ensconced in the home of a widow, he might have remained safely hidden there until the heat died down, had not an unfortunate accident revealed his whereabouts to John Brush, a Major in Washington's army. The Major, a wealthy farmer, secretly crossed to Long Island from time to time to look after his property. On one such expedition, neighborhood gossip informed him of the presence of Claudius, and he immediately laid plans to gain the rich reward. The several versions of the capture conflict in detail but are substantially the same. The widow may, or may not, have been a party to the conspiracy.

Mr. Titus, "a very stout and resolute man," and three other Connecticut men, agreed to make the attempt. Armed with muskets and pistols, on a dark night (to avoid chance of discovery by the British patrol boats) they crossed the Sound, beached their whaleboat in a sheltered cove, and proceeded a mile inland to the widow's house. Flickering firelight disclosed her knitting alone by the fire.

They entered without knocking. Mr. Brush asked the widow:

"Is he in the house?"

"He is in bed. I will call him."

"No! Tell me where he lodges."

"Upstairs in the bedroom."

He told her to hold her peace, and immediately three of them proceeded above, leaving one below. They entered Claudius' room without noise and seized him. He made violent resistance, attempting to reach the guns under the pillow, but was soon subdued and bound.

His captors carried him to the boat and cautiously rowed across to Connecticut. There they ironed and placed him under heavy guard, until a troop of cavalry, led by Colonel Woodhull (poetic justice?) was sent by Governor Clinton to escort the famous fugitive. Many notables, civilian and military, rode in the procession, which the whole countryside turned out to witness.

AT Goshen he was given into the custody of Sheriff Nicholl, who had him chained to the cellar floor of the reinforced jail to await trial.

A guard was posted with orders:

"To keep a musket pointed directly at his head at all times.

"To shoot, if any outside disturbance should indicate an attempt at rescue."

A Negress brought in his meals. One night he chided her for stumbling over his chains:

"They are mine. You have no right to touch them."

Despite the many murders tradition lays at his door, the only provable charge was burglary, a capital offense.

> In court of Oyer and Terminer and General Jail Delivery held at the courthouse in Goshen, County of Orange, Wednesday, the 13th. of January, 1779.

Present the Hon. John Yates, John Sloss, William Hobart, Esquires, Justices of the Supreme Court.

The people of the State of New York vs. Claudius Smith, Mathew Dolan, John Ryan, Thomas Delamar, James Gordon and Amy Augor.

For the felony of stealing two geldings of James Savage; the robbery of Simon Fink; the burglary of the house of James Earle, etc.

You and each of you shall be taken to the place from which you came and there, to be respectively hung by your neck until dead.

When asked if he had anything to say, Claudius replied:

"If God Himself cannot change your minds, I cannot."

An immense throng filled the valley of Goshen in the dawn of the day of execution. They came in all types of conveyances from as far away as Jersey and Long Island. (One account definitely sets the number at fifty thousand. In the light of the size of the population of that day, this seems excessive, but may not be.)

Claudius conducted himself with a dignity too seldom emulated by lesser criminals of a later day.

"He rode to the gallows erect and serene; bowing to several he knew in the crowd; looking to the mountains as if expecting help to come at the last moment.

"Claudius was dressed in a suit of rich broadcloth, with silver buttons, and with his large form and manly air, presented a noble appearance."

The miser, Abimal Youngs, was present, with a purpose. He worked his way through the crowd to the foot of the gallows cart.

"Claudius! Tell me where my papers are hidden. They are useless to anyone but me."

Claudius smiled.

"Mr. Youngs, this is no time to talk about papers. Meet me in the *next world* and I will tell you about them."

The Reverend Ezra Fisk took advantage of the occasion to deliver an edifying sermon on the text: "Be sure your sins shall find you out."

The hangman asked the condemned outlaw if he had a last request.

"Yes!" he said. "I would like to have my boots removed. My mother said that I would die like a trooper's horse, with my shoes on. I want to prove her a liar and a false prophetess."

(A shocked witness wrote afterward: "History cannot produce any act evincing more infernal depravity, more deep and ingrained at the hour of death.")

This last dying wish was granted.

"When the cart was drawn from under, he swung to and fro perfectly straight to evince no feeling; when senseless, he twitched a little and exhibited signs of life after he had hung a long time."

The crowd dispersed. They buried him in an unused corner of the Presbyterian churchyard.

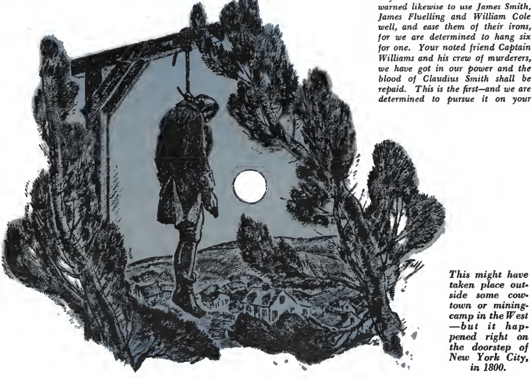
After the death of its wily and cautious leader, the gang ran amok. This item appeared in the newspaper the New York *Packet*, April 28, 1779:

We hear from Goshen that a horrible murder was committed near the Sterling Iron Works by a party of villains, five or six in number, the principal of whom was Richard Smith, son of the late C. Smith of infamous memory; his eldest son having been shot last fall in company with several other villains by one of our scouting parties sent out in search of them. These hloody miscreants that night intended to murder two men who had shown some activity and resolution in apprehending the robbers and murderers who infested the neighborhood. They first went to the home of John Clarke, whom they dragged from his house and shot.

"He is not dead enough yet," said one, and fired again.

They pinned the following note to his coat:

"You are hereby warned to desist from hanging any more of our friends as you did Claudius Smith. You are warned likewise to use James Smith, James Fluelling and William Cole well, and ease them of their irons, for we are determined to hang six for one. Your noted friend Captain Williams and his crew of murderers, we have got in our power and the blood of Claudius Smith shall be repaid. This is the first—and we are determined to pursue it on your



This might have taken place outside some cowtown or mining-camp in the West —but it happened right on the doorstep of New York City, in 1800.

head leaders to the last—till the whole of you are murdered."

They then went to the home of Henry Reynolds and endeavored to effect an entrance, but the windows were securely barred and bolted. Determined not to be baffled, they got up on the roof and were descending through the wide chimney when one of the family threw a basket of feathers on the fire and smoked the intruders out.

Some weeks later they secured entry by pretending to be a detachment from the army in search of deserters. When Reynolds opened the door, they attacked and wounded him with knives, then hanged him from the trammel-pole of his fireplace.

"While the marauders were ransacking the house for valuables, and his wife cowered in a corner, courageous Phœbe, a daughter, cut him down, laid him in bed and endeavored to stanch his wounds."

The robbers returned, whipped her with ropes, and hanged Reynolds again, this time hacking at him with swords and knives as he dangled. Then they stole his papers, locked the doors, set the house on fire and departed. The redoubtable Phœbe extinguished the blaze, cut down her father again, and leaving the family to minister to him, rode off to rouse the neighbors in pursuit.

Reynolds, who had been wounded in thirty places, "whose ear hung down to his shoulder, which when put back in place never looked quite natural afterwards," lived to the ripe old age of eighty-five.

Some years after the death of Claudius, the lame man, taking a shortcut through the cemetery, leaned too heavily on his cane. It sank through the damp earth, struck a hard object. The enterprising cripple returned that night, exhumed the remains, and lived comfortably for a while on the proceeds of the manufacture and sale of knives whose handles were fashioned from the bones of the famous outlaw.

This is as much as I have been able to learn about the character and adventures of the first American outlaw. Further research may turn up more. The story of the girl who became his wife has fascinating possibilities; as has the legend that a local witch predicted his death upon the gallows.

In the course of my investigations in the vicinity of what was once Smith's Clove, I learned that fireside tales and legends about him (often distorted in the telling) have been passed down by word of mouth from one generation to the other. By the red glow of flickering log fires, children still listen in morbid fascination as their elders recount the story of the deeds and misdeeds of Claudius Smith and his outlaw band. . . .

While holding no brief for him as a hero, it is impossible to deny that he possessed certain traits, reckless courage, generosity, humor, color, and a quality which for want of a better word we call "bigness," which drew grudging admiration even from those of his own generation of whose wealth he exacted toll.

A criminal psychologist might comment on the personal degeneration of the real and fictional outlaw since the days of Claudius Smith. Allowing for modernization of weapons and of transportation, they have failed to improve upon the methods he used or the example he set.

Certainly, if Claudius could be aware of the tactics of the present-day mugger, purse-snatcher or black marketeer, whom he must perforce acknowledge as his own seed and breed, those souvenir knives would turn over in their sheaths.

Songs That Have Made History

III—DIXIE

Footlights glistened on the grinning, ebony faces, blackened with burnt cork. Bryant's "Negro" Minstrels, great favorites here in New York and on the road, were clicking off another performance in a long run. A limber fellow sprang from the seated semi-circle, clad in gaudy-colored swallowtails and pantaloons, and danced a buck-and-wing. The interlocutor fed lines to the end men, who cracked jokes that convulsed the house with laughter. Then tambourines jingled and thumped, "bones" rattled, and the veteran minstrel, Dan Emmett, twanged his banjo—strumming a bit nervously tonight, for the troupe was about to try out for the first time a song he had written for the "walk-around."

Only a few days ago, the manager had asked him to turn out a new number. Emmett, though he had composed "Old Dan Tucker" and a string of other successes, racked his brains in vain. Coming home out of the chilly streets one evening, he could only think how cold it was in New York this winter of 1859 and how warm it was for luckier actors playing down South. He sighed to his wife, "I wish I was in Dixie."

Dixie—Dixieland. Some said the South was called that because it lay below the Mason-Dixon line, but more believed the name came from $10 Louisiana banknotes, engraved *Dix* (ten) in the days when that State's population was largely French. Mrs. Emmett, unbothered about origins, looked up suddenly at her husband's remark about longing for the South and said, "There's your song idea." Dan seized his fiddle, picked out a melody, and "Dixie" was born. Several nights later, he and the troupe were parading around the stage to its lively rhythm and singing:

> Den I wish I was in Dixie, hooray! hooray!
> In Dixieland I'll take my stand and live and die for Dixie.
> Away, away. Away down South in Dixie.

Wild applause from the audience. Dan Emmett had scored another hit. Other minstrel companies took it up and spread it through the country. It would not make his fortune—he sold it outright for only $300—but it earned him fame.

It brought him bitter chagrin, too. In 1861, Dixie was sung at the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as President of the Confederacy. Acclaimed as the anthem and battle song of the South, its strains helped carry the Gray through its smashing victories in the earlier years of the war. Dan Emmett, strongly loyal to the Union, took it hard. His grandfather had fought in the Revolution, his father in 1812. He himself in his youth had served in the Army as a fifer. Now he angrily wrote new words to his song:

> Away down south in the land of traitors,
> Rattlesnakes, and alligators,
> Right away, come away, right away, come away.
> Where cotton's king and men are chattels,
> Union-boys will win the battles . . . . .

But it was the original that stuck, and neither Emmett's new version nor other ones caught on.

Yet the epilogue was a happy one. On the April day in 1865 when news of Lee's surrender reached Washington, a cheering crowd with a band flocked to the White House. Gaunt Abe Lincoln stepped out on the portico. Instead of making a speech, he asked the musicians to play "Dixie." That grand song was now, he said, the lawful property of the Union.

That knowledge must still have been a consolation to Dan Emmett, who had unwittingly given aid and comfort to the enemy with his song, when after a fairly prosperous career, he died in poverty. And "Dixie" continues to thrill Americans, whether they live in the South or the North.

—by Fairfax Downey

The Fabulous

THE khaki-shirted British officer tossed a montage of air photographs on the table. The keen-eyed American officer, alone with him in the stuffy tent, studied them intently. The pictures were stamped SECRET. The sign outside the tent read: GSI (General Staff Intelligence). It was Italy in the fateful summer of 1944; the place—main field headquarters for the British Eighth Army.

"Do you think you can find out something about them for us, Al?"

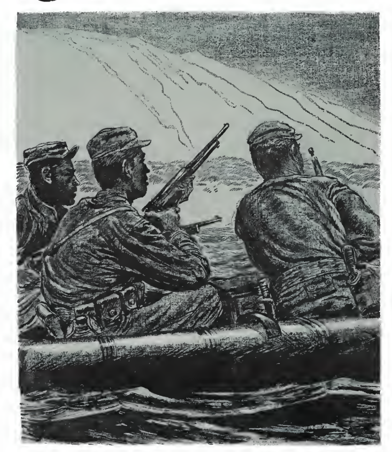
Major Alphonse Thiele of Jersey City, New Jersey, commanding officer of the OSS detachment attached to the famed British fighting force, only smiled quietly. Without replying, he turned to the overlay maps of Tuscany which hung nearby. Threatening red marks—symbols of German defenses and troop concentrations—infested the area covered by the photographs. It was hardly surprising—the plane that had taken those pictures had been flying at top speed over the heart of the formidable Gothic Line defenses.

"I think I've got the boys for the job, Colonel, but it's sure going to be tough. What's all the excitement about these buildings, anyway?"

Quickly the youthful Eighth Army Intelligence chief outlined the problem which had suddenly assumed top priority. It was a mystery of such importance that the lives of five crack Intelligence agents were to be risked in a daring effort to seek its solution.

Object of such top-level curiosity were the three peculiar concrete buildings shown in the photographs. Air reconnaissance had reported considerable suspicious activity around these three extraordinarily substantial structures.

Just at this time, London and the Channel ports were being severely blasted by German V2 buzz-bombs. The dread fear that these fiendish weapons, against which there was no defense, might put in an appearance on the Italian front had the Intelligence brass, big and little, seriously worried. Alert to the slightest hint that the Nazis were preparing such a devastating surprise for them, the British desperately wanted to have these strange buildings checked. Were they even now being readied for V2 rockets? Only a careful observer on the spot could supply the crucial answer. That was the ominous question to which, after a lengthy discussion,



Cautiously Thiele moved toward a dark silent figure. . . . He called out

Major Thiele now committed the Fabulous Five.

The story of the almost incredible missions accomplished by this OSS agent team is typical of the fine international coöperation developed during the war in the common cause of crushing the Nazis. Here was a group of young Italians—in the service of the Office of Strategic Services, America's great and already famous wartime agency of Intelligence and underground warfare—willingly risking their lives to help the British Army in its fight to drive the Germans out of Italy.

During the bloody campaign upon history's most battle-scarred peninsula, the OSS, commanded by able Major General William J. Donovan, recruited hundreds of native Italian agents. None were more colorful nor more daring than the Fabulous Five. Not once but many times their sheer nerve and resourcefulness had cheated Nazi firing squads.

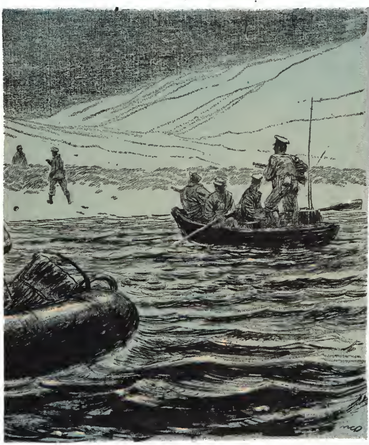
Such daring patriots as these, working under American direction, became the eyes and ears of our forces. Their behind-the-lines operations were a constant threat to the German rear; and the great underground resistance movement they helped to arm and organize played a major rôle in the final German surrender.

The Fabulous Five had been recruited by Major Thiele in Allied-occupied Italy. Ranging from seven-

Five

From behind the enemy lines in Italy, this daring OSS team radioed priceless information. . . . Two of them had been stood against a wall to be shot when a diversion came from the skies.

by LT. COMDR. RICHARD M, KELLY, USNR



in Italian and asked to have the man responsible for the signals appear.

teen to twenty-two, these five young adventurers, despite widely divergent backgrounds, complemented each other perfectly. Highly intelligent, and amply supplied with the good fortune that comes to the bold, their exploits included the assassination of a German general, a split-second escape from a German execution squad, and the commandeering of a Fascist municipal police force right under the eyes of the Gestapo.

Even today the Fabulous Five can be known to us only by the unusual code names given to them when they served in the OSS. Radioman for the team was "Rolando," a former student; his companions—"Buffalo Bill," a spirited character whose youthful exuberance had earned him a taste of Fascist jails; "Red," another ex-student, who would try anything once; "Stalin," youngest of the lot and a fervent Communist—until he came to work for OSS; and "Potato," adventurous son of a wealthy Italian family.

All were intensely loyal to the Allied cause and to each other. With good reason, they also hated the Germans and Fascists. Their intensive OSS training had made them adept with all weapons, and given them a solid background in military intelligence.

Major Thiele's detachment was the principal undercover Intelligence force serving the Eighth Army. With the help of a small group of American communication and Intelligence experts, his was the job of recruiting, training, briefing, infiltrating, supplying and withdrawing the secret agents who kept the Army staff informed of vital activities behind the German lines. A major part of the detachment's activity included the maintenance and twenty-four-hour operation of a secret radio station which kept daily contact with the various agent teams, and processed their valuable intelligence messages for distribution to the appropriate Allied commanders.

After intensive OSS training, first assignments for the Fabulous Five were highly dangerous short-range missions through the lines to secure intelligence immediately behind the front. This type mission was frequently far more perilous than operations deep in the German rear; the team's execution of such missions would be a rigorous test of their eventual worth to OSS.

The men would be taken to the most forward British outposts late at night. This approach to the front frequently involved coming under enemy artillery and machine-gun fire. About halfway between the British and German positions the escorting officer—either Major Thiele or one of his Italian-speaking sergeants—would leave the agents with last-minute instructions and a whispered, "Good luck!" From then on, the men were on their own. In addition to the natural risk they ran from German front-line troops, they had to be alert to enemy minefields; once they were through the immediate forward area, they had to be watchful of German military police, Gestapo and security forces who kept careful tabs on all Italian civilians.

The desired information was usually gun positions, troop identifications and supply routes. With smooth dispatch, the Pia team, as the five were officially known, successfully completed several touchy jobs.

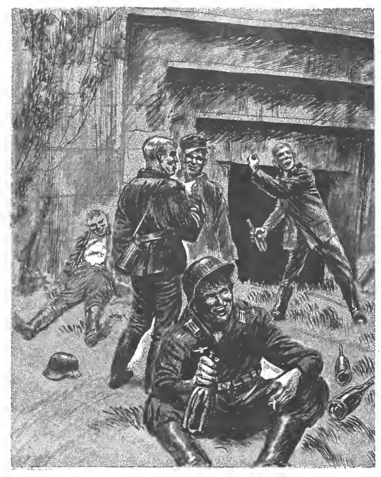
Major Thiele now realized that he had developed an unusually capable unit. While the Eighth Army Intelligence officer was outlining the importance and hazards of this V2 mission, Major Thiele had been considering his agent resources. He felt confident that this crack unit was ready and eager for such a major mission. He was right.

The Fabulous Five accepted this dangerous assignment with relish. As every day was vital, an air drop was immediately lined up to infiltrate the men to the target area. Fortunately, all five had previously received parachute training. After a thorough briefing, they were ready to take off.

Their pinpoint was an open field about five miles from the suspected buildings. The American and British Intelligence services had very little information on the zone. No active partisan formations were known to exist there, nor was it possible to give the Pia team the names of any safe contacts. From the time they left the low-flying bomber until their return, their only protection would be their own wits.

The departure of an agent team, particularly when they were to drop blind into unknown territory on a dangerous mission, is always a time of great emotion. Major Thiele had grown to like this carefree quintet. As he watched them plummet from the darkened plane toward the blacked-out Italian countryside, he felt a quick apprehension for their safety. His fear was to be justified. Subsequent events, by any normal standards, would have cost the lives of at least two of his agents.

Things were very different in the plowed field below. By contrast, the five young Italians were all smiles—calmly confident and exhilarated by the dangerous work ahead. All five had made a good jump. Landing easily, they had picked up their gear and chosen their hide-out for a sleep until dawn. It was then that their troubles began.



Refreshed, eager, they crept out carefully to appraise the countryside. A question here and there to an unsuspecting farmer brought distressing intelligence—they had been dropped nearly twenty miles from their pinpoint. This was discouraging enough in itself—for cross-country movement added greatly to their peril; but an even more serious challenge quickly presented itself. Due to some recent sabotage activity against the local German forces, the Nazis were at that very minute conducting a severe *"rastrallimento,"* or mop-up, to terrify the people and destroy a small local resistance group. As a result, the countryside was in an upheaval; the peasants were frightened and suspicious of strangers and such partisan leaders as might ordinarily be counted on for assistance were on the run.

There was one bright spot in all this threatening news. At least there was some sort of organized underground in the area. If this partisan group were not wiped out by the current German drive, they could probably be developed into an Intelligence network, and could also be used to protect the team's all-important radio.

Quickly Pia rallied; at least they could spot German troop movements in this area. Scouting around, they had by dusk some valuable information on these movements which they immediately radioed to base, along with the news of their safe arrival.

That night, making their way cautiously through the fields, they moved safely to within a few miles of the suspected buildings. Now their first objective was to secure a safe hide-out for their radio. Without that, their mission was doomed in advance to failure. Fortunately in this perfect summer weather the precious set could easily be hidden in some woods about a mile from a small town. Rolando, the radioman, immediately set himself up nearby.

The upset local situation and the extreme time urgency on checking the possible V2 emplacements presented a major problem. The safe way would be to lie low until the German mop-up was over, and then cautiously establish contact with the local resistance forces. With this accomplished, the mission would be relatively easy.

This possibility was discussed and summarily—as well as unanimously—rejected. Bolder action was called for, and the Fabulous Five were equal to the challenge. Inasmuch as they had no time to cultivate resistance friends, they would make contact with the Germans themselves!

This, obviously, was a do-or-die decision. Its greatest chance lay in its very audacity. Buffalo Bill rather fancied himself an expert in preparing Italian dishes, an idea the Germans were soon to share. He knew that German soldiers, like all others, were fond of good food and bored with the monotony of their regular rations. Well, in this case, the way to a man's secrets was going to be through his stomach, and Bill would be the one to prove it.



"V2 rockets to blast those British and Americans out of Italy!" Ridiculous!

It was a sunny morning when a fine strong Italian peasant appeared at the door of the German cook tent. He wanted to be a kitchen helper; he was eager, and willing; the German noncom to whom he presented himself offhandedly agreed to give him a try. The sauce that night was a creation; the creator was in. Thus did Buffalo Bill blandly establish himself in the midst of a German detachment, cooking away to his heart's content, picking up the empty plates in the officers' mess, and with them, choice bits of valuable intelligence. Every night he slipped away for a secret meeting with another member of the team, who would promptly relay the news to Rolando at the radio for transmission to base.

Eighth Army was congratulatory at this quick success, but the main object of the mission was still to be achieved —the mystery of the buildings. "Potato" now took the lead, since it was he who spoke fairly good German. To read of his scheme today is to know only amazement at the odds a brave man will take. His first step was to barter with a peasant for the purchase of a loaded wine-cart—full, of course. His next was to take a few drinks, until he presented a sufficiently rakish and carefree appearance. Then he was off, dragging his cart behind him, along the road to the suspected buildings.

The detachment of Germans billeted there were busy in their routine —but not too busy, it seemed, to take time off and have some fun with this half-drunk Italian who wanted to sell them wine. What's more, he was all for passing out generous samples, and his price was well below the local asking rate—he said he had plenty of wine and needed the money. They gathered around him, glad of the diversion. The *vino* flowed freely; the peasant was a simple-minded fellow, good bait for their jokes, and there was plenty of time to work.

The group was soon in a hilarious mood, the peasant smiling foolishly and chattering in the midst of them. He was a stupid fellow, filled with stupid ideas. For instance, listen to him now saying in his broken German: "I know what you fellows have inside there—V2 rockets to blast those British and Americans out of Italy!" How ridiculous! The fellow was drunk on the lousy wine he was trying to sell them. Just let him see. "Come in here, lout!" This from a well-oiled German, who half-pushed the now-protesting fellow into the door of one of the emplacements.

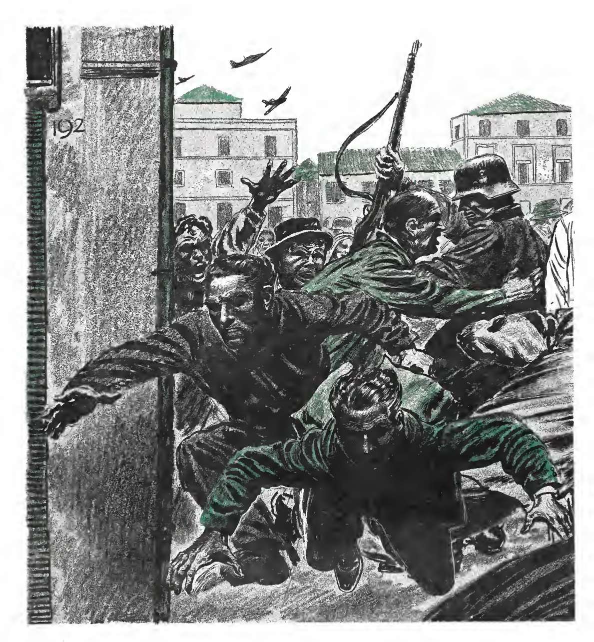
Potato stepped inside. What the British could see only from the air, he was now viewing face-to-face. With a sharp glance, he had the information he wanted; this was but a heavily fortified artillery position. The Germans were roaring among themselves now, pushing him out, shoving him against his cart. "On away, stupid! What oafs are these Italians! Bring us back better wine tomorrow!" The shouts followed Potato's bent figure as he weaved slowly down the road, dragging his wine-cart behind him.

That night the great news was flashed to base. The Fabulous Five had scored again. Just four days after taking off on their mission, their major Intelligence objective had been accomplished. Their achievement was well received at Eighth Army headquarters.

While Bill and Potato had been worming their way into the confidence of the Germans, Red and Stalin had been attempting to establish contact with the local underground, with the purpose of building up an Intelligence network. Discreetly representing themselves as former non-coms in the Italian army and Allied sympathizers, they soon discovered that the main elements of the resistance stemmed from a nearby village. The next step was to set themselves up in this village. Soon they were in touch with members of the underground.

They began to organize a road-watching network along Highway 65 between Bologna and Florence, to report German traffic along this main supply artery. Acting on their information, the RAF made several highly successful attacks. Their plans were progressing famously when, several days later, some underground leaders paid them a visit. Without warning, a German detachment surrounded the town, searched every house and arrested the two agents in their quarters. In searching the room, the Germans discovered a spare radio which had been hidden there.

Red and Stalin were immediately arrested, identified by the Gestapo as Allied agents, quickly tried and sentenced to be shot. Twenty-five of the townspeople, including several women, were sentenced with them. The exe-



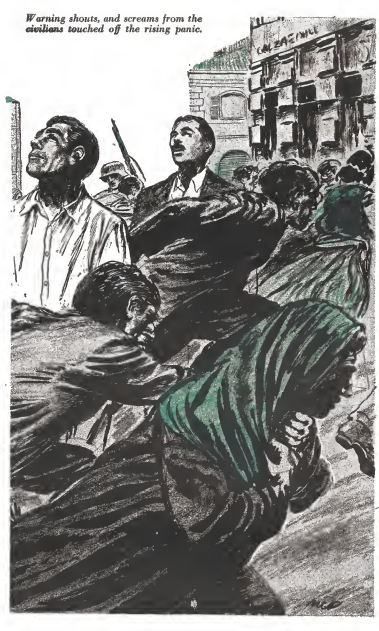
cutions were set for the following morning.

News of this tragic development quickly reached Buffalo Bill and Potato. They first determined where their two partners were imprisoned, and then hurried to Rolando, who fortunately had remained in hiding with the other radio. Together the three surviving members of the Pia team discussed possibilities of saving their comrades. There didn't seem to be a chance. Not only had the raid captured all the underground leaders in the town and terrified the rest of the people, but a strong German detachment had moved in to preserve order and guard the doomed prisoners.

Suddenly the three thought of the RAF, which had been responding with such splendid bombing results to their intelligence tips on German road movements. Maybe they could help. It was an outside chance, but they were desperate enough to try anything. Quickly they prepared an urgent message for Major Thiele, sending it immediately on their emergency schedule. In it they outlined the fate of their two comrades, gave the exact location of the town jail where they were held, and urgently requested the intervention of the RAF at dawn.

This message reached OSS Eighth Army late at night. There wasn't a second to lose. The briefing for the dawn sorties by Desert Air Force Spitfires was scheduled to take place in a few minutes. Frantically Major

Warning shouts, and screams from the civilians touched off the rising panic.



Thiele contacted DAF headquarters at Eighth Army. In a few terse sentences he outlined the situation and asked for a diversionary strike. The Chief Intelligence Officer for DAF was receptive. He was well aware of the many excellent targets that OSS had supplied, and he also knew of the fine work that the Pia mission had been doing in reporting German movements on Route 65. He remembered, too, that OSS men gave top priority to rescuing shot-down airmen. Yes, one of their dawn sorties would take a look at the area and see if they could do something to muss up the Germans and help the condemned agents.

There was no time to get a confirming message back to Rolando. There was nothing to do but wait and watch the clock as the minutes crept toward the hour of execution. . . .

Back in the Tuscan hills the situation was if anything more tense than at base. Bill, Potato and Rolando had done all they could. They had complete confidence that Major Thiele and the rest of the boys at base would do everything possible. But had there been time enough to get word to the Air Force? Would the Air Force divert planes for what was admittedly nothing but a 100-to-1 chance of saving the lives of two Italian agents? They could only wait and watch, pray for the miracle and curse the bad luck that had let the Germans discover the incriminating radio. There was no way they could get a message to their doomed comrades—it would have been fatal to try to go themselves, and no one else in the village dared to visit the convicted men lest the Germans decide to shoot them too.

MEANWHILE in a cell of the filthy jail, the two agents sat talking quietly. Around them they could hear the women and men sobbingly protesting their innocence. In vain at the trial had they assured the Germans that they alone were guilty. But the Gestapo were taking no chances: Innocent and guilty alike had been condemned. Red and Stalin knew that many of these poor people had done nothing against the Germans. They had merely given the OSS men food and shelter, or had been seen talking to them. Most were innocent; yet there was nothing that could be done to help them.

For those trapped people they felt a great sadness; as to themselves, they had no regrets. They knew that this was the chance they had taken when they undertook to become secret agents for the OSS. They were glad that the other three members of the team had not been caught. The Germans had assumed, when they found the extra radio, that just the two of them made up the team. They knew that word of their capture and coming execution must have reached their buddies. The Germans had ordered all the local people to the town square to witness the executions. Had they any chance to escape?

The facts of the matter shook their natural optimism. The jail was sturdy; well-armed German guards covered every exit. They knew that there was no underground force that could possibly attempt their rescue. They agreed they had only one chance—if Rolando had got word to Major Thiele, the Air Force might intervene. It was a glimmer of hope; surely the Air Force would come, for the weather was perfect, and Thiele would organize it . . . . A few bombs, and they'd be free. With mounting excitement they planned their escape. Neither would admit that all their hopes were built on the slimmest of foundations.

Now it was getting light—the little town was coming to life after a sleepless night. The dawn of its saddest

day was at hand. The jail was quieter. All hope was gone from the poor wretches. The shrieks were less frequent now. The guards were stirring themselves. "Let's get this dirty business over with."

At five o'clock the cell doors were opened, and the prisoners were given some bread and a little wine. Then they were led out into the courtyard. Red and Stalin shook hands.

"The planes ought to be here any minute."

"Sure, it won't be long now."

THE Germans marched them toward the square. It was filled with people, and German soldiers seemed to be everywhere. Not a chance to make a break for it! The dreaded swastika hung arrogantly from the prefettura in the early summer morning breeze. There was hardly a face to be recognized in the crowd that now fell back hastily before their Nazi escort. The simple townsfolk seemed paralyzed with grief, fear or burning hate. A few tight-lipped faces gave them a glance of encouragement, and some darkly-garbed women, children and not a few men were sobbing openly. Several looked at them with awed surprise, some with pained bewilderment—for everything had been peaceful until these strangers came. The two young Italians couldn't face the emotion of the crowd.

Three sides of the square were packed. The fourth was empty; here a sun-bleached wall was plastered with Fascist recruiting posters and Nazi propaganda sheets—leering American Negroes attacking Italian women, and star-spangled bombs blasting Italian churches and hospitals. Against this lying shameful backdrop they were to die.

Red and Stalin exchanged a furtive glance. They were nearly to the center of the plaza when a voice yelled: "Planes." The hum of motors was louder now. *"Anglesi! Bomba!"* a cry of excitement went through the crowd. All eyes, both German and Italian, glanced upward toward the brilliantly rising sun—none more eagerly than those of the two OSS men at the head of the grim procession. Alone of the entire assemblage did they realize what this dramatic intervention could mean.

It had been but a few seconds since the first shout, but now all activity in the square suddenly ceased. Germans and Italians alike watched with apprehension as the five Spits roared overhead at fifteen hundred feet. The crowd, soldier and civilian together, began to feel dangerously exposed in the open square. A mass movement started toward the surrounding buildings. People began to edge into the streets leading away from the plaza. The prisoners, all save our two friends, seemed struck dumb by what was happening.

The planes banked sharply, strung themselves out like a thundering snake, and with a terrifying roar commenced their dive at the center of the square. Warning shouts from the Germans and screams from the civilians touched off the rising panic. In an instant the screaming mob sensed what was happening, and rushed madly in every direction for shelter.

Aloft the young squadron leader peered over the side of his cockpit. "This looks like it, boys. Let's break 'it up down below!"

At five hundred feet the bombs were away and plummeting toward the jail. The planes kept on toward the plaza until it seemed that they must crash right into it; then with a tremendous roar they pulled up and rocketed skyward. Seconds later they were sweeping across the town with cannon blazing at almost housetop level.

Red and Stalin had melted into the dissolving crowd at the height of the confusion. Heedless of the diving planes and falling bombs, they had dashed up the nearest street and headed for the hills. In less than a minute they were out of town and running at top speed across the fields. So quick had been their break, and so complete the frantic rush for shelter, that no one, German or Italian, had given them the slightest heed. Halfway to Rolando's hideout, they met Buffalo Bill, Potato and Rolando on the top of a hill from which they had watched the whole performance.

All five set off at a run for their secret rendezvous. Here they radioed a heartfelt message of thanks to Major Thiele, and holed up to rest. . . . A few days later they learned that after the planes left, the Germans had rounded up most of the condemned townspeople and shot them.

THE FABULOUS FIVE now teamed up with a band of partisans who were operating from the wild Tuscan hills against the German traffic along Route 65. This small group, armed with old Italian weapons and some captured German pieces, staged almost nightly ambushes against enemy truck convoys. The work was exciting and comparatively safe, for the group always took off after the first telling volleys, being content with a few trucks and a few Germans each night.

Daytimes were spent observing the road from well-hidden hilltop positions, and noting unit identifications for transmittal to base. One day while the OSS men and ten of the partisans were lying in the bushes at a vantage point overlooking the road, they spotted a German staff car, flanked by two motorcycles heading toward them. There was no other escort—it was too good an opportunity to miss. Quickly the group lined up along the side of the road at the top of a hill, where the car would have to slow up, and readied their ambush. One of the men had salvaged a light 20-mm. anti-tank gun; and just as the Germans reached the brow of the hill, he lobbed a shell into the staff car. At the same time everyone else opened up on the motorcyclists and the staff car with small arms. The two cyclists were killed instantly. The staff car careened off the road and turned over. As there was no sign of life near it, the little group ran up, and found to their delight that they had bagged a German major general commanding a division. His dispatch case and personal papers contained top secret German defense plans, as well as a wealth of other highly prized information.

This rich intelligence windfall was so valuable that two of the Pia team started back to Allied lines to deliver it in person. They arrived safely, to be greeted as the heroes they were. The remaining three men were overrun in the Allied advance that soon followed, and returned to Major Thiele for a well-deserved rest.

THE FABULOUS FIVE had now completed two highly successful missions, one series by land and a second by air. On their return from a vacation in the winter of 1944, Major Thiele offered them a chance to penetrate north Italy. This was the prime area of interest now, as plans were well along for an all-out offensive in the spring of 1945. Object of this drive was to crush the German armies in Italy or force their unconditional surrender. Important to its success was an all-out Intelligence offensive to spy out German plans, defenses, and counter moves. Another major objective was the coördination of the growing Italian partisan forces, who could be so useful attacking the German rear during the coming offensive.

These twin objectives and the rescue of shot-down Allied airmen were the next challenge given to the Pia team. Major Thiele consulted with Intelligence officers of Eighth Army, and it was decided that a location near Treviso just north of Venice would be ideal for the team. As there were no good dropping-grounds in the area and it was much too far for overland infiltration, Thiele made plans to deliver the Fabulous Five by sea.

Some weeks previously the OSS Nelson team had made a successful blind landing from a PT boat on the northern coast of the Adriatic about midway between Venice and Trieste, near the small port of Caorle. A radio query to this team brought confirmation that they would receive the Pia mission on the shore.

The long trip from Ancona to the pinpoint involved plenty of hazards. The northern Adriatic was considered by the British Navy to be as heavily mined as any body of water in the world. German patrol vessels were an added threat, and there was always the possibility that an enemy or, as occasionally happened, a friendly plane would cause trouble. Still another constant danger lay in treacherous winter storms which swept down from the north and were fully capable of wrecking the fast little craft.

In spite of all these difficulties, Pia prepared for its final mission, and Major Thiele made arrangements for the trip with the British Navy. On February 20, 1945, the infiltration was first attempted; but halfway to the pinpoint a rising sea forced the PT to turn back. A second attempt was made the next night. Its failure, but without any loss of life, attested once again to the charmed lives of the Fabulous Five as well as the courage and skill of the young lieutenant commanding the PT.

Major Thiele, Staff Sergeant Michielini and Pvt. Devivi of the OSS Eighth Army detachment went along to act as an escort and beach party. In addition to seeing that Pia got ashore properly, Thiele was also anxious to have a conference on future plans with the leaders of his OSS Nelson team, who were to act as the beach reception party.

At six in the evening the stripped-down PT, carrying no torpedoes, nosed out of Ancona harbor and headed north. The sea was calm and hopes of success were high when at 12:55 they changed course at Caorle to head for the rendezvous, seven miles east. At this point they spotted three enemy warships dead ahead. Creeping in at slow speed to three thousand yards, the crew of the PT identified them as a corvette, an "R" boat and an "E" boat, all of which were presumably more heavily armed than the small British craft. Apparently the PT was spotted at this point, because the "R" boat increased its speed to catch up with the corvette and exchanged signals with it, after which the German craft reversed their courses.

Unfortunately, this move put the enemy vessels between the PT and the pinpoint where the shore reception party was shortly scheduled to begin flashing the signals. Just after this maneuver, the Nazi "E" boat roared off into the night. Fifteen minutes later, it signaled the corvette from off to the right. Hoping to ease away from the enemy and anxious to avoid any action that would jeopardize the secret landing operation, the PT moved slowly toward the pinpoint. At 0145 they crossed what looked suspiciously like the track of a torpedo. The British skipper, giving it the benefit of the doubt, called it a riptide current; but when they crossed a second track three minutes later, it was evident they were under attack. A third torpedo was spotted a minute afterward. Fortunately, it passed ten feet ahead of the bow.

The skipper reversed at full throttle. It was just in time. A fourth torpedo flashed by, missing them by inches.

By now all thought of successfully carrying off a secret landing was gone by the board. After firing off some star shells and letting go with his 20's to give the impression they were merely an offensive patrol, the PT headed back for Ancona—all hands thanking God for their split-second escape.

It wasn't until March the ninth that the moon and weather were right for another attempt, but by this time another suspicious element had arisen to becloud the picture. For some time the Nelson radio had been having trouble with transmission. Messages to base were confusing, and to put his mind at ease that the Germans had not captured the set and were operating it, Thiele had asked the team to transmit its prearranged identification signal. The response was not completely satisfactory. There was no valid evidence that the radio was compromised, but the confusion and grave doubts persisted. The torpedo attack on the last attempt might have been an ambush. . . . Thiele was worried.

On the night of the ninth the run to the pinpoint went off perfectly. There on the low-lying shore were the flashing signal lights, one green and one red, blinking the prearranged code. Because of his suspicions, Thiele directed the British dory party to head

"I'm an American. The war is almost over. If you want to live, I'm the new chief of police!"

Illustrated by John McDermott

for the green light, although the last radio message had told him to head for the red one. About thirty yards off the beach, Thiele ordered the dory to stop, leaped out and with drawn pistol quietly waded ashore. All hands in the tiny dory and accompanying rubber boat, including the Fabulous Five, had their weapons in hand, ready to cover Thiele and open up at the first hostile sign from the beach.

Cautiously Thiele moved toward a dark silent figure. While still a dozen yards away, he called out in Italian and asked to have the man responsible for the signals appear. The figure on the beach agreed, and disappeared. For a tense minute all was still. Then another man appeared, wearing a handkerchief over his face. Again Thiele called out. This time, to the intense relief of everyone, this man was recognized as the leader of the Nelson team.

Quickly now the two boats paddled ashore, and our five friends were landed without further delay. Three shot-down British airmen and three New Zealand ex-prisoners of war were taken aboard in their place—and once again the Pia team was on its own behind enemy lines. After all the suspense and trouble of their several sea voyages, the Fabulous Five agreed that they felt much safer to be on land again—even in German-held territory.

On the way back to Ancona the PT, racing along at more than thirty knots, hit an object in the water which caused a large explosion twenty yards astern. Apparently they had tripped a floating mine, but by some freak of luck, they escaped and made port safely.

AIDED by the Nelson party, the Pia group moved northeast to the Treviso area, where they set themselves up in a small town just north of the city. The first few days there established clearly that the German-directed Fascist police held a firm grip on the town. All activities were closely supervised, and the tight controls were a serious threat to gathering the necessary intelligence. The Fabulous Five held a council of war. With characteristic boldness they conceived a dramatic *coup*—if the police were a threat and ran the town, why not take over the police?

Carefully they laid their plans. Buffalo Bill, the fiercest-looking of the lot, was chosen to play the main part in this all-or-nothing effort. Accompanied by two of his partners, Bill approached the police station. While the others waited outside, casually chatting with some Fascist policemen, Bill walked upstairs and entered the chief's office. Once inside the room, Bill carefully closed the door, then quickly wheeling around, shoved his pistol into the startled official's stomach, announcing:

"I am an American. The war is almost over. If you want to live, I'm the new chief of police!"

The terrified Italian police officer was too stunned to reply. Bill prodded him again with his pistol. The chief recovered himself a bit weakly, nodded, and collapsed into his chair. OSS took over. Bill had correctly gauged the situation: With the tide of the war running against the Germans all over Europe, most Fascists were anxious to get on the winning team. From that moment on, he operated as chief of police.

The Fascist official stayed on, but he took his orders from Bill. The rest of the Pia team now moved into the police station, dressed themselves in police uniforms and enjoyed the run of the town. The Fascist police force was turned into an information service for the OSS, and as a crowning piece of effrontery, the team's secret radio was operated from the security of police headquarters!

This amazing development immediately stepped up the flow of vital intelligence from the Pia mission. It also resulted in one of the most unusual experiences that ever befell a member of the United States Army Air Force:

Captain Hanson, a P-47 fighter pilot of the Twelfth Air Force, was so shot up on a mission to north Italy that he was forced to make an emergency belly landing in the Treviso area. Tall blond twenty-three-year-old Hanson spoke not a word of Italian. Thankful at having escaped death in the crash, the Captain leaped out of his wrecked plane and stood by, waiting to be picked up by the enemy.

The crash had aroused the countryside, and Hanson was quickly surrounded by Italian civilians. Two of these immediately pulled off his Air Corps clothing and dressed him in ragged civilian clothes. Then, seated on the front of a bicycle, he was rapidly pedaled toward the town nearby. *En route* he was amazed at passing several German patrols racing toward his crashed plane. The Nazis hardly glanced at him. By now the young pilot was thinking that his new friends would spirit him to safety, but his high-rising hopes received a rude setback when his bike was stopped in front of a building with the ominous sign, "*Polizei.*" Hanson spoke neither Italian nor German, but he knew that in his situation "Police" spelled bad news in any language. Suspecting treachery but powerless to help himself, he was pushed inside the building and ushered upstairs into a room occupied by a very dark gangster-type Italian police chief. By now, Hanson was sure that his goose was cooked.

The Fascist police official looked up from his impressive desk, gazed for a moment silently at the blond young American, and then in broken English said, calmly: "Hello, American, where are you from?"

Convinced that he was being interrogated as a prelude to torture for information, Hanson stiffly replied by giving merely his name, rank and serial number.

The police chief smiled at Hanson's uncompromising attitude and remarked: "I know you're from Cesenatico. I've been there myself. I'm from OSS."

Captain Hanson, like a great majority of men in the armed forces during the war, had never heard of OSS. He was confused, and even more suspicious, as he had left his home base at Cesenatico just a few hours before. He didn't know the game of this English-speaking Italian official, but he wasn't giving out any information. Again he merely repeated his name, rank and serial number.

THE pseudo-police chief, none other of course than Buffalo Bill of the Pia team, realized that additional proof would be necessary to convince this stubborn young flyer. Coolly he put his hand in his pocket and drew forth a packet of Camel cigarettes. He offered Hanson one, and then turning around, lifted the blanket on his cot to show the secret OSS radio and codebooks. Hanson's face relaxed; his determined look gave way to one of dawning recognition. Tremendously relieved he broke into a wide smile.

"Oh, Intelligence!"

Within a few minutes the two were joined by the rest of the Fabulous Five, all sporting big Fascist police arm-bands. By this time Hanson was ready to believe almost anything, and he joined in the gay celebration which immediately developed.

That night one of the five escorted Hanson to a farmhouse near Caorle, where he was taken over by the Nelson team. For five days he was hidden in a loft of the barn, fed fresh milk, chicken and eggs, and given excellent care. Four nights later he was led down to the shore, where he was introduced to Major Thiele, who had come up on another mission to supply the Nelson team and exfiltrate escaped Allied personnel. It was with some effort that Thiele persuaded Hanson to hold his exciting tale until they were back on board the PT.

The next morning Hanson rang up the control-tower at Cesenatico.

"Who's this?"

"Mike."

"This is Hanson."

"Go on! Hanson had it, a week ago!"

"Mike, this *is* Hanson! I was picked up by the OSS near Treviso. I've never had it so good. Came back last night on a PT. Those OSS guys are terrific!"



McQuillan Lends a Hand

Kind of heart and strong of arm, our hero wishes himself into an exciting situation—and takes violent measures against the wolf stalking the Widow Crotty.

by FRANK LEON SMITH

Now, in Canarsie there were some who claimed that man and boy, Rodney McQuillan had never been able to mind his own business. His friends, however, didn't see it the same way. According to them, he was too generous with his strength and skills. The fact was, any hard, heavy or awkward job became a sight-demand on his services.

A demand of this type was in the making, at the Magoon Building. Furniture movers, trying to boost a heavy crated machine up the stairs that led from a little open foyer, were stuck. A small crowd, languid with the afternoon heat, offered helpful hints, and some were hoping the load would get away from the men, and cause an interesting accident.

Around the corner in an old pickup truck, came big handsome Rod McQuillan, field manager of the Crotty junk and house-wrecking activities. At the wheel was his small, seamy-faced protégé, ex-penitentiary man Disbro Whispell. The two were returning from the site of a wrecking job; and with civic pride, Rod was holding forth on the advantages of life in metropolitan Canarsie.

Glancing off at the trim two-story store-and-office building, in the hope of exchanging salutes with his old friend Duffy Magoon the druggist, Rod saw the crowd, and the cause of the gathering.

"Stop!" said he, to Whispell. "Back up and park. I'll not be long!"

"Gees, Rod, and you with your good pants on?"

"I'll keep it an arm's-length job," said Rod easily. "If I can get two fingers under it, I'll throw it through Magoon's roof!"

With him, it was the work of a moment to shove the moving-men aside, and to get under the crate, so that much of the weight of it was on his back. "Here we go gathering nuts in May!" he announced, and started backing up, boosting the burden a stair at a time.

But there was a turn in the staircase. Rodney's impulsive reconnaissance had missed it. A few steps up and the crate stuck, and so did Rod.

Squatting, thick legs braced, elbows on knees, Rod threw bursts of extra power into his back and leg lift. Then, spitting on his hands, though he could not put them to work, he counted: "One—two—three!" and threw in all he had. Except that the crate dug deeper into the stair wall, nothing happened.

Duffy Magoon, emerging from his store, appeared in the foyer. He stooped, recognized Rod under the load. "Hello, Rodney boy! What's the good word?"



"Mrs. Crotty, this is the end! I can brace meself against your normal stupidity, but now you go too far! I'm leaving you!"

"Ah, there, Duffy. Take a look at what's binding us."

Duffy looked. "The corner's got it. Come out!"

"Come out, is it? And let this thing chase me to the sidewalk and paint me on the pavement?"

Suddenly the crowd parted, and Rod could see large well-polished shoes, and the legs of uniform trousers.

"Break it up! Keep moving there!" said an official voice.

Rodney had recognized the feet by an odd double-bunion group. Policeman Plunkett! Rod and this Plunkett were old acquaintances, and more than once Plunkett had taken a professional interest in Rod's career of violence. Now, at sight of those familiar feet, Rod's face went beefsteak red. "Beat it, Plunkett!"

Plunkett stooped, stared, smiled. "Well, now, and you don't look to me like a lad who knew what he was doing, or what to try next!"

Duffy Magoon spoke up loyally: "Lay off the man, Plunkett. This is no time for gossip."

Plunkett did a nonchalant rock, heel and toe. "I just spotted your little stir-bum friend outside—"

Rodney was quivering under his load, in reaction to strained muscles, nerves and temper. Perspiration dripping from facial low-points, formed tiny pools on the marble staircase. Now, at the insult to Whispell, he exploded.

"I was prepared to be polite with you, Plunkett, but your insolence matches your stupidity! When last seen, you were strolling Broadway, Manhattan, in the quiet street-clothes of a detective, second grade—"

"Easy there, McQuillan! None of that!"

"And now, here you are, prowling Canarsie in the lounge suit of a common cop! Punishment, no doubt, for your—" A strange sound ripped through his remark. By the sound, and by a subtle change in temperature, Rod knew that his trousers not only had ripped—they now were but a pair of cowboy chaps, held together by his belt. "Duffy!" he bawled. "Duffy Magoon!"

"Right here, Rod!"

"Be a good lad. Run out to the pickup and ask that little bird with the plowed-ground wrinkles to advance with the jack."

Plunkett moved on. Presently Whispell and Duffy Magoon came running with Rod's pet jack. Rodney let the moving-men coöperate, but he insisted on having the jack placed and blocked as he directed. When they wound up on the jack and took the pressure off him, he eased out, and stood on the stairs. He was bent as though posing for Atlas, holding up the world.

"Fun's fun," said Whispell. "Come on, Rod. Let's go."

"No!" said Rod, working the kinks out of himself. Then he turned back to the job. He had a moving-man climb up over the crate; then he got into position. They unwound the jack and let him take the load once more. This time, with the man up ahead to guide it, Rod pushed the load to the second floor without a stop.

"Thanks for the lift," said the boss mover, giving Rod a puzzled look; for it was seldom, nowadays, that one encountered these volunteer Jean Valjeans.

Rodney dusted himself off. His face was dripping; his hair was plastered on his brow; his new trousers bagged at the knees, and the seat was quite open. "What is this thing, would you say offhand?" he asked, slapping the crate.

The moving-man gestured toward an office door, with a sign: "Dr. Krysos Dominick—Academy of Health, Beauty & Charm."

"It's a reducing machine, for this Dominick."

The Doctor's door opened. A lady was leaving. Ushering her out was Dr. Dominick, in person—a huge sallow man, inches taller than tall Rodney. He wore a white tunic and a forehead reflector. He had oily black hair, a silky black mustache, eyes like pools of molasses, and so many teeth that he seemed to have a short ear of corn in his mouth. As his lady visitor was backing out, he was flashing all these teeth in a smile for her.

RODNEY reeled. The lady, back to him in the doorway, was of noble figure, and attired with a smartness. Beneath her hat was an amazing hair-do, the color of new Manila hemp. Mrs. Crotty! The Widow Crotty! Belle Crotty, stunning proprietor of the Crotty junkyard—Rodney's boss, Rodney's fiancée!

At sight of Rod, Dominick's eyes snapped. "Bum!" he yelled. "Go out from here!" He caught Belle Crotty by the elbows, to keep her from turning. "Don't look! A drunken beggar-bum, from the streets! Pah, such peoples!"

This, from the man in whose service Rodney had split his trousers! The moving-men, standing around, expected Rod to go into action, but he

dared not speak, lest Belle recognize his voice—whereupon she'd want to know why he was there and in that condition. Pausing only to throw a ferocious jaw two inches nearer Dr. Dominick, he turned and ran down the stairs.

Duffy Magoon and Whispell were waiting with the jack. Duffy wagged his head as he surveyed Rodney. "You're a wreck, and in what a cause! Boosting a fake machine upstairs, for a fake wrestler, with a fake shingle!"

"A fake, is he now?"

"He is," said Duffy Magoon. "I'd like to get him off me premises and rig the place as a flat for a young vet and his family that wants it—but he stays on and on, and now he's expanding his business."

Rod nodded, threw the jack in the truck, and he and Whispell sped back to the Crotty junkyard. Whispell, seeing Rod was in a mood, remained silent for blocks. Then he ventured: "The guy was much obliged, eh, Rod?"

"He was not. He called me for a bum!" Rod breathed fire. "I'll be back and pound him around!"

"Why didn't you work on him now?"

"He had a visitor. A lady."

AND that lady was Belle Crotty. Why was Belle visiting this Dominick? She had beauty; she had charm. And health? She was always up with the birds; she was blazing with energy; and she could stow away meals that would bog a stevedore, with no effect on the finest form in Canarsie. Then, could her visit have been—social?

Rodney McQuillan was an easy-going man, quick to give a friend the benefit of the doubt. "Sure," he thought, "she went to this Dominick to bid on some old machine he's throwing out."

Disbro Whispell glanced at him, cleared his throat with some sounds in the bass register. "Rod," he said, embarrassedly, "could that cop do anything? He said he knew who I was."

Rod gave a hoot. "Plunkett? He's a joke entirely. If he gives you any lip, I'll have to remind him it is illegal to harass a man who's paid up his dues to society. Think nothing of it, Disbro. You're in good standing, and I'm well pleased with you."

Disbro coughed, in polite acknowledgment of this praise, and went on: "He said he probably might run me in as a vag."

Rodney chuckled, smote Whispell's knee. "And you with a steady job at the yard? With McQuillan himself as your sponsor?"

"But is the job steady? And how about Mrs. Crotty? You're in solid, of course, but I don't think she was ever crazy about me."

"She's nuts about you!" declared Rod; and then, noting his crony didn't seem to believe this, he said impulsively: "All the papers have not been filled out, but I believe she's about to crown your fine efforts with a small raise!"

"Gee!" said Disbro, with a blush flowing over his seamy face.

Arriving at the yard, Rodney washed up, shaved, trimmed his mustache, and drew on his smartest raiment and his new derby. Then he strode through the yard, with a tranquility to match that of any fellow, homeward bound o'er his lea. At the rear door of Belle's bungalow, he paused, listened. Belle, within, was singing:

"Pony Boy, Pony Boy—dah-da dah-da de-da-doy!"

At his knock, she stopped singing. Her high heels tapped, and: "Who's that?" she inquired through the closed door.

"Romeo Q. McQuillan! The catch of the season!"

She opened up, and Rod tramped in. "Ah, and it does me heart good to hear the old songs. They stick to your mind as they do to me own!"

Belle, alert to the most distant trespass on the subject of her age, said sharply: "'Pony Boy' came out long before my time, but I'm always hearing those back numbers on the radio."

Rodney's mustache stretched on an admiring grin as his gaze paid homage to her curves. "Never saw you looking handsomer, Mrs. C. As for meself—" He struck an elaborate pose he had remembered from a Fulton Street window dummy. "Those too shy to applaud in the usual manner will kindly write their praise for McQuillan on little cards, which will be taken up by the ushers!"

Belle gave him a cool look. "Did you always wear your mustache as stubby as an old brass gear-brush? I like a good long mustache on a man."

Rodney put a hand to his upper lip. "I thought at the time me scissors were going too far. However, give me a week, and I'll show you a pair of lip antlers like they wore in the Civil War."

Belle was looking, not at him, but just above his head. Rod stood an even six feet; a height which had pleased Belle, and her eyes had always stopped at the right spot to put the top bracket on him. Now it was as though she could conceive a taller man, and was comparing heights. Snapping out of it, she glanced at her watch.

"You and Whispell will be going to the night game, over at Ebbets, no doubt?"

"I thought we'd all go," said Rod. "After we eat, of course. And what fine mahogany trough shall we put our front feet in tonight, me dear? Name the place, and we're halfway there."

Belle picked up her purse and gloves. "I'll not be dining with you, McQuillan. I have a dinner date, and a bit of a business meeting, after."

"Ah, well—and what a pity." Rod took up his derby. "By the way of no harm, and whilst I think of it, how about a bit of a raise for Disbro? Sure, the little man will be frantic with joy—"

"See me tomorrow," said Belle hurriedly. "Step out, Rod, so I can be locking up behind you. I'm late, already."

Rodney made his way thoughtfully through the yard to the watchman's villa, where he and Whispell were in residence. It didn't occur to him that he had a rival. But suspicious as always, about Belle's business deals, he was wondering what she was getting herself into now, and he was thinking that the sooner he knew, the sooner he could get her out of it.

IN the morning, when the sun was young and the shadows long, Disbro Whispell was up and out, putting a touch of paint on some window boxes that decorated their villa. From the doorway, Rod rendered a nod of approval.

Then bald little Whispell gave Rod a surprise.

Paint brush in hand, he took a quick step on some cleared ground, shot into the air and turned a back flip, coming down lightly on his feet.

"By garry now!" cried Rod. "And where did you learn that?"

Disbro said in his deep bass, "Aw, you know."

"Sing Sing Gymnastic Team?" inquired Rod politely.

"Joliet. I belonged to the Tumblers' Club."

Rodney gave him a clip on the back. "You're an astonishing kind of man, Disbro! I'll want more of these acrobatics, for they delight me eye." He hiked his overalls. "One minute, till I tell Belle good morning, before we get to work."

In a lofty mood, this dewy morn, with diamonds sparkling on a thousand iron edges, Rod moved through the yard, beating a playful fist on old tanks and boilers as he passed, and he finished off the pattern of his rhythm, on Belle's back door.

She opened up, and turned back to her office. As he followed, he saw at once that Belle, as trig and trim as always, was carrying one shoulder a bit higher than the other, and her head was at a slight slant. He was concerned, but concealed it with gallantry: "Ah, the hod-carrier's daughter, I see!"

"What a thing to say!" Belle tried for the old Crotty head toss, and gave a sharp little sound of pain.

"Where is it? In the back of the neck?" asked Rod, advancing with strong fingers spread. "I'll give it a massage, like."

"You keep away from me!" she cried, retreating.

He gazed at her in sympathy. "You must have been dashing around in a nightmare with a heavy hod of ancestral bricks on your shoulder, and gave your head the wrong twist when you woke."

"I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about," she said primly, and seated herself at her desk. "Well, Rod, if you have nothing in mind—I'm busy."

"Continuing where we left off last night," said Rod, "about that raise for Whispell—"

"There'll be no raise!" said Belle. "On the contrary, I have to cut down me overhead, at the yard, so Whispell will have to go!"

Rodney gaped, for it seemed incredible that words so terrible could come from one so lovely. Without looking up, Belle continued: "The money I'm squandering on his wages will work better for me in me new investment." Topping this off with another head toss, she winced with pain.

"Ah," said Rod grimly, "a bolo blow, from your conscience!"

"Not at all. Er—later in the day I may call on Dr. Dominick for another of his treatments."

Electricity shot through Rodney. "Another—of his treatments?"

"Yes," said Belle. "I had the first one yesterday."

"H'm," said Rod. "What kind of doctor is this Dominick?"

"The best. He's way up."

"Do I know him?" asked Rod craftily. "Would he be that little broad-shouldered felly, on Canarsie Avenue?"

"He's head and shoulders taller than you!" said Belle. "An elegant man, with a flowing mustache. He has offices in Duffy Magoon's block, with all the latest style equipment."



"What's going on here?" said Plunkett. "Who's responsible

Rod's heat was rising. He put his hand to his mustache, and he remembered. He remembered, too, that queer look she'd given him, two or three inches over his head. "It wouldn't be that you dined last night with this lad—and talked business?"

Belle flushed. "Don't play district attorney with me!"

Rod advanced to her desk, rested both fists on it. "Who recommended this fine fellow to you?"

"I discovered him meself, and he'll be all the rage in Canarsie. Maud Waterbury's been to him—"

"Maud Waterbury's head is as empty now as it was when she was Maud Calhone!" Rod cleared his throat. "And just what does this Dominick do, when he gives you a treatment?"

"Oh, he puts you on this table, face down, and there's a little trapdoor in it, and when he gets his thumbs on the right place and pushes, you'd swear your back was going through to the cellar. It tones up the system, and improves your form—"

Rod slammed her desk so hard she jumped in her chair. "You were in elegant form till you went to this roustabout, who, no doubt, studied the medical arts in the wrestling ring!"

Belle was furious. "Your gibberish is most offensive, McQuillan! Not that it concerns you, but I'm going into business with the Doctor! I'll put up the money so we can expand in a big way, and I'll get me commission on every new client I bring in! I'll be speaking to all the girls in Canarsie—"

"No, Belle! No! Don't do it!"

She went right on: "And I'll be telling 'em about the new patent reducing machine the Doctor's just had made, where you sit inside in a bathing suit, and the heat of the lights remove your excess fat, after it's been loosened by a dozen little fists on levers!"

Rodney gave a terrible groan and reeled back. "It sounds shameless



for this roughhouse? Looks like your work, McQuillan!"

entirely! And you'd sit in this evil hooby trap?"

"I would! I'm to have the first treatment!"

Rodney walked to the wall, hauled off and hit it as hard as he could, then turned hack to her. "Mrs. Crotty," he said, hoarse with fury, "this is the end! I can hrace meself against your normal stupidity, hut now you go too far! To think you'd be so unfair as to fire Whispell! To think you've become delirious about this Dominick! Mrs. Crotty, I'm leaving you!"

"Oh, no, Rod! Now look—I need you here—"

"I'll he leaving at once, with Mr. Whispell, and I'll not inform the good little man why we're going! Mrs. C., this is the end, and that's flat, final and official! You can keep me ring, or you can throw it in the Gowanus Canal! Good day and good-hy to you!"

With that, he strode out. Across the yard, Whispell was cutting up old fire-escape sections with a torch. Rodney gave his rage a moment's recess and gazed with pride at his protégé, who bad been so bappy, here, in honest toil. Well, the honesty of that toil would continue, but in some other vineyard, which Rod would select. By afternoon, the two would he well on their way. . . .

Moving into their villa, he started to pack. Toward noon, he heard Belle's high heels on the hoard walk that led from her hungalow, and hastily he closed tbe door. She knocked, waited, then knocked again, and then she called: "Rodney? Rodney! Come on out till we have a good laugh at yourself!"

She waited a moment, called again, and then she was annoyed. Peering out, Rod saw her turn and survey the junkyard. "No doubt he's crawled into some old boiler, to sulk," she said audibly, "hut I've no time to be paging hoilers and pipes!"

He heard the angry tap of her heels as she went away, and stealing to a side window, he studied her retreating figure. From her trim ankles to her golden hair and wide girlisb hat, she spelled glamour to him. And now, perfume she'd left hanging in the air outside, worked through the walls and unmanned him. He turned hastily from the window, to recapture his fine rage.

He must go, as planned. That was the only course, for a proud man like himself. It didn't seem right to go, without pounding around this Dominick, who'd called him for a hum. But now that Dominick turned out to he a rival, it wouldn't he good judgment to lay hands on him, as that would make him a martyr, and build him even higger, in Belle's eyes. Yet, there must be some way. . . .

The noon whistle blew. Rodney leaped to the door, stepped out and hellowed: *"Whispell!"*

Dishro produced himself, a small smiling man, in overalls covered with rust and dust. Rodney inspected him.

"You're in terrible shape!" said he. "I'm rushing you to the doctor!"

"Why, I thougbt I felt pretty good," said Dishro.

"We'll hotb feel hetter, after this visit," said Rod.

They put some supplies in the pickup, and drove away. Arriving at Duffy Magoon's hlock, they parked around the corner.

"What do I say to the doc?" asked Dishro.

"The less, the hetter. You're the patient. I don't want you to know too much, for the responsihility is mine. However, I'll coach you, as we go along."

As they started up the stairs, Duffy Magoon came into the foyer. "We're calling on Dr. Dominick," Rod explained.

Duffy rubhed his chin. "Look out for him, Rod. He's a hig felly, and he used to be a wrestler."

Rodney smiled. "But he's a fake, and you want him out?"


Plunkett raced down the stairs and out.

Duffy nodded. "I'm thinking of speaking to Plunkett—"

"You're no informer, Duffy, and neither am I. Step into your store, now, and if you hear anything, be the last man out."

Duffy said no word, but returned to his store.

Rodney and Whispell stepped lightly up the stairs, carrying paint-pails and brushes. It was half-past twelve, when Rod tried Dominick's door, then rapped on it.

"Office close up! Come back one o'clock, is office hours!" called the man inside.

"This patient can't wait!" said Rod, and rapped again.

Dr. Dominick opened up; a scowling giant, with sleeves rolled back over thick arms. He had been working on his new machine; the power was on, and the thing was making quite a racket.

At sight of the pair in the hall, Dominick recoiled in disgust, then tried to shut the door. Rod had a foot in it. "Are you the doctor?" he asked, and gave Whispell a shove forward. Instantly, he followed, and as Dominick retreated, so as not to be brushed by these untidy fellows, Rodney closed the door, and locked it.

"Get out!" cried Dominick. "What is the meaning?"

"This little man is in terrible form!" said Rod easily. "He has these spells, and we can't stop him. Can we, Disbro?"

At this signal, Disbro, with a dripping paint brush in his hand, began a bewildering exhibition of tumbling. Around the office he flew, in pinwheels, flips, cartwheels, throwing paint all over the place. Dominick screamed, and gave chase.

This gave Rod an opportunity to inspect the waiting-room, office and treatment-room, and dressing-room. Dominick's only authorization to be in business was a big framed "diploma" hanging high up, where it was hard to read. Rod took it down. Official looking, at a distance, it turned out to be a certificate showing that Krysos Dominick had studied Health, Beauty and Charm, by mail. Rod tossed the diploma aside, and turned to watch the show.

Dominick had slipped on wet paint, and was picking himself up. Rod held a paint pail so Disbro could dip his brush, in passing; then the chase was resumed. There was paint, now, on ceiling, walls, furniture; and pursued by Dominick, Disbro was doing some rare knockabout acrobatics over, under and around the table with the trapdoor, which Belle had described.

"He cannot stop, when he gets these attacks," Rod said in explanation. "What's your diagnosis, Doc? Painter's frenzy, like?"

Suddenly, Dominick cornered Whispell, and moved in, but not too far. With a dripping paint brush, the little man kept him easily at bay.

Rod moved to a side window, glanced out. An alley, with no one in sight. Promptly he began to toss Dominick's chairs and furnishings into the alley. Dominick swung around, gave a yell, and dived at Rodney. Rodney feinted, and as Dominick flung up his arms, Rod grabbed him, rushed to the table, and flung him on it, face down. *"Now!"* he roared; and leaping aboard Dominick, he put his weight on the portion of him that rested over the trapdoor. Dominick blew out his breath with a loud *"Oof!"* and rested there, winded.

Rodney jumped down, leaped to the door, unlocked it, and motioned Disbro out. "Take the truck, beat it to the yard, and forget you've been here. My thanks, Disbro, for an elegant performance."

"Gee, Rod, will you be all right?"

"Of course, and from here on, two against one would be unfair."

He closed the door, locked it, and looked around quickly. Grunting, gasping, Dominick rested on the table. Rodney took a good look at the machine, which had been chugging away all this time.

It was a white enameled steel cabinet, with a couple of motors in it. The front and top doors were open, and he could see that the thing was full of light bulbs, for heat, no doubt. From the sides and back, levers on hinges and springs were lashing out, striking blows in the air with little padded leather fists. As Rodney gazed in amazement, Dominick dived at him, and the two went down in a heap.

Dominick tried at once for punishing holds. He was a big man and a powerful man, and his wrestling know-how seemed to give him the extra arms of an octopus. But Rodney had been in housewrecking and other heavy trades all his life. He rose, presently, with Dominick clinging on, and staggered to the cabinet. Wrenching Dominick loose, he threw him in. The top cover had a hole in it, and when Rod slammed it down, Dominick's head came up through. To latch this door, and to slam and lock the front door, was the work of an instant.

The cabinet rocked and reeled, as Dominick tried to get out. He let out a roar that tapered astonishingly into a giggle, as though he were being tickled. His head was bobbing as he rode up and down on the little seat. The little fists were pounding at him, and the heat from the bulbs made his face stream. *"H-e-y-y-y-y-y-y!"* he cried.

Rod glowered at him. "And that's the corn-popper you were going to try out on me fiancée!" he shouted.

Someone was beating on the hall door, and calling out. Rod turned away and resumed the job of tossing Dominick's furnishings into the alley. There were more blows on the door, and he recognized Belle's voice. Stalking to the door, he yanked it open.

She gaped at him. "Why, Rod! How came you here?" She looked past him, into the office, gave a startled cry, then turned to him anxiously. "Rod! Are you hurted, Rod? Where's that Dominick?"

"Why, he just stepped into his box, to take a treatment," said Rod, and moved aside, so she could see the cabinet, with Dominick's head bobbing above it.

"Good grief!" she gasped. "Is that —is that the box?"

"That's the box," said Rod grimly, and then it was his turn to stare. In the hall behind Belle, Officer Plunkett appeared, holding Whispell by a twist of his sleeve. "Let go that man!" said Rod. "He doesn't interest you!"

"He does indeed!" said Plunkett. "The tune is vagrancy, and I caught him by the back alley, with evidence of disorderly conduct piling up—"

"What's all this, now?" demanded Belle, turning, and that gave Rod a chance to yank Whispell from Plunkett's grip.

"And how can Mr. Whispell be a vagrant?" Rod asked calmly, maneuvering to keep between Whispell and the angered officer. "He's on the permanent staff at the Crotty junkyard. Is he not, Mrs. Crotty?"

"Why—why, of course," faltered the flustered Belle.

"With a raise in his next envelope, which we all feel is long overdue," said Rod grandly, with a meaningful look at Belle. "And now, Plunkett, if you'll excuse us. —Come on, Disbro. Are you ready, Mrs. Crotty?"

"Hold on!" said Plunkett, looking at them and at Duffy Magoon, coming up the stairs; and turning to stare into Dominick's office. "What's going on here? Why, it's a shambles!"

"Write it all down in your book," said Rod. "Take a long pencil!"

"Who's that man in the box? Who put him in there? How do you shut off the power?"

Rod pushed past Plunkett, into the room, yanked the cord loose from the wall-plug, and the motors stopped. Dominick, soaked with perspiration, his long mustaches hanging down like seaweed yelled: "Let me out! Arrest those bandits!"

Plunkett gazed about. "Who's responsible for this roughhouse? Looks like your work, McQuillan!"

Duffy Magoon walked in. "Since when," he demanded of Plunkett, "can a man ply the doctor's trade in New York with no proper license to hang on his wall?"

Said Rod: "If this lad in the coop can show any papers, I'll pay all the damages out of me own pocket, and you can lock me up—which might be your big chance to get back on Broadway in street-clothes, Mr. Plunkett!"

With that, Rod strode past Plunkett, and out the door. In the lower foyer, Belle was waiting. He thought to pass her, without a word. It worked. She grasped his arm, and he let himself be halted.

"Rod—are you sure you're not hurted?"

"And how would I be hurted, since I served, not as the patient, but as the practitioner?" His instinct was to hug her, but he made himself stern, and returned her anxious look with a frown. "Where's Whispell?" he demanded.



Dominick flew past without a word.

"He went on."

"He keeps his job, and he gets his raise?"

"Of course, Rod. Anything you say."

"'Tis only a moral victory, but for Disbro and me, an important one." He looked at her, and she flushed and averted her gaze. "You were a bit late, if it was in your mind to launch the new reducing box. Mr. Dominick officiated in person, as you saw."

"It was in me mind to have him pinched!" cried Belle. "Maud Waterbury called me up, and she's had three treatments from him and now she feels as though she'd been hung!"

"H'm," said Rodney. Down the stairs, four at a time, came Dominick, in his shirt-sleeves, some garments on his arm, some small effects in his hands. He flew past without a word. Then, Plunkett, club in hand, raced down the stairs and out.

Said Rod: "He have a lead on Plunkett, but with visions of getting his detective grade back, I'm betting on the officer."

He turned to Belle. "Well, I believe we have a few formalities, Mrs. C. If you'll be handing Mr. Whispell and meself the monies you hold for us, we'll be on our way."

"No, Rodney! I'll not let you go. I—I believe you've saved me from making an awful fool of meself."

This, from Belle, was a handsome admission. Rodney gathered her in, and gave her a big crushing kiss. "Anything wrong with that mustache?" he murmured.

"'Tis perfect," said she. "Do it again."

He did; then they went out.

Whispell was waiting, by the pickup. Rod waved him on, and helping Belle into her sedan, he took the wheel. "We'll say no more about the incident," he remarked, as they drove away. "Only this—the thing that tried me patience most was the fact that you'd think of reducing the finest physique in Canarsie!"

"Oh Rod, you say the nicest things!" Belle snuggled against him. "Sure, there's nobody quite like you!"

"How true you are," said Rod, beaming with honest pride. "Now you take this little job at Dominick's Academy. Half done; far from me best work, and many small loose ends, but look at the social gains! Redress for a slight; protection of me employer's interests; a shyster put to rout; a flat made empty for a vet; possible promotion, for a cop; and a reformed character rewarded for merit, with a raise! Let's see, is that all?"

"'Tis enough, and let's be changing the subject—"

"Oh, yes, I quite forgot. Now, as to this big deal you were dreaming up, with this Dominick, Disbro knows nothing, nor will he, for he's led a sheltered life—"

Belle shot up in her seat. "Sheltered life, is it? And what way has he been sheltered! Why, he's been in every—"

"Shut up, dear. Leave us not ruin this perfect day," said Rodney McQuillan.

Okeechobee

A Florida hurricane in the big swamp, and a boy entrusted with an important job. . . . By the author of "Joe Tiger."

by ZACHARY BALL

DAWN came like a gray, angry old man, determined to beat the last shred of resistance from every living thing. He defied and threatened with hateful, shrieking sounds; he marched away in wild challenge, then came stalking back to see what was left for him to trample into the waters he had poured upon the earth.

One Seminole Indian boy, twenty-two head of prize cows, and the calf. They were helpless to do anything but huddle tightly together and let the hurricane blast at them.

Tommy Cypress was afraid. He was afraid to sickness of the death that was creeping up his legs. Flood waters! Not death with a quick slash like lightning cutting through a tree, but a slow, bad ending. Flood waters kept reaching for you a little at a time, and all you could do was wait for them to take you.

Tommy Cypress couldn't have seen a safe place to swim to, through the hurricane-driven rain, if there had been one within a hundred yards. But it didn't matter, because it would be impossible to swim even fifty yards in such a storm.

Calf was making pitiful little bellows that were like the cawing of a crow in the storm's roar, and his mother kept trying to comfort him with her tongue. Tommy Cypress picked him up and set him where he could get to the udder. Calf wasn't going to have much of a life. Just one night, and a little part of one day.

Tommy Cypress wiped the rain out of his face with a soggy sleeve, and stared into the wet fury about him. Hunger twisted at his middle. The last food he had had was at noon yesterday, just before he started out with the cows. . . .

Early yesterday morning when the Miami Weather Bureau had begun broadcasting storm advisories, everyone at the Knowles dairy-ranch had stopped whatever they were doing to listen. The tropical storm was far out over the Atlantic, and at first, the weather bureau was unable to say just where it would strike the Florida coast, if at all. Then the noon advisory said it was a severe hurricane, and that it was headed for the mainland, with the center expected to reach Palm Beach about daylight tomorrow morning, and cross the peninsula in a west-northwest direction.

Following that announcement, a special warning was issued to the people of the Okeechobee section, which was in the direct path of the storm. They were told that trains would soon begin arriving to evacuate the ten thousand or more residents of the lowland region.

Mr. Knowles had snapped off the radio then, and told Tommy Cypress to saddle a pony and move the small prize herd down through the swamp shortcut to the Miller high pasture.

Mr. Knowles was a big, wide-faced, grim kind of man, who expected a great deal of the people who worked for him. Tommy Cypress had been at the Knowles place for two weeks. He had been taken on on trial; if he could convince Mr. Knowles that he could do a hand's work, he would have a steady job. The only reason he got the chance at all was because it was so hard for the outlying ranchers and dairymen to hire reliable help. He wanted to stay on here because he planned to take a course in agriculture, which he could do and keep this job too, when he had saved enough to buy a motorbike. He would have to have his own transportation to school.

"You get on with them cows," Mr. Knowles had told him. "You look after every single one of them."

"Yes sir."

One of the ranch hands offered to take the herd through to the high pasture, if Mr. Knowles thought a man should do the job.

"Certainly a man should do the job," Mr. Knowles grumbled. "Try and hire men nowadays!"

"Maybe we should try to drive all the stock to high ground," the man suggested.

"Naw. We couldn't get the big herd through that bog swamp without losin' half of them," Mr. Knowles said, swinging his head. "And there isn't time to take them the long way. Besides, we got to keep the milk stock here so's we can get milk to the town folks right on, if possible. We'll just have to try to keep the critters on the high spots if water comes." He put his bleak little eyes on Tommy Cypress. "You, boy! You be careful drivin' them cows through the bog swamp. And don't hurry that young Jersey too much."

"Yes sir."

"When you get them pastured, you hustle back here so's I can send you with the womenfolks and youngsters to the evacuation train."

"Yes sir." . . .

As he moved the twenty-three cows down across the lowlands, Seminole boy was proud of this assignment. It was a good chance; the first real chance he had had to prove his worth to Mr. Knowles. He rode leisurely, not pushing the cows, and watched the occasional clumps of wind that were beginning to drop out of the overhead into the deep grass and roll away, pressing furrows in it as they went. The sky was filling with long gray cloud-tails, feelers that reached out several hours ahead of a hurricane. He liked the open grassland. It always made a clean coolness in him that he could taste. And he liked to smell the greenness of the grass mixed with the rich, dull smell of the black soil at its roots, soil that once was swamp mud.

Like always, he let his eyes rove the miles of waving green, searching for hammocks, to see how many he could locate. He counted fourteen. The hammocks were humps of high ground on the swamp prairies, grown up in pine, oak, cabbage palms and coconut palms. Looking at them across the breathing grass, they always made Tommy Cypress think of ships on the horizon loaded with standing-up feather dusters.

The bog swamp was a half-mile-wide stretch of deep muck. When he came to it, Tommy Cypress left his cows to graze, and rode into the timber to locate a narrow hogback of solid ground that crossed the bog about here. He located it, went and got the cows and sent them in onto it with no trouble whatever.

IN here was the dankest, gloomiest kind of jungle. Great moss-hung cypresses stood stolid and somber, their knees in the water and muck. Ferns, beautiful and monstrous, grew everywhere. Endless miles of vines twined and curled and squirmed over and around trees, searching, as they had been doing for centuries, for one more branch to encircle.

Wind was tromping over the forest roof, shaking and switching the treetops, and Tommy Cypress was glad the cows were show stock and not easily frightened. The skittish little pony, though, was fretting about the way Wind was yelling around,

and she had to be watched every minute to keep her from dancing off the narrow hogback and into the bog.

He had his herd strung out in single file, moving nicely, and halfway across, when the two lead cows stopped and began butting at each other.

"Ha-a-e-e-ah!" Tommy yelled. They paid no attention to him. Crazy fool animals.

There was nothing to do but go up there and stop them before others got into it. He pushed the pony carefully along, past the others, but before he got to them, both cows were off into the muck above their bellies, still trying to fight.

He drove the rest of the herd across, thinking of the job ahead. The jumpy little pony, he knew, wasn't going to make it any easier for him. He couldn't go back to the ranch for help, because he had to keep watch on the rest of the herd. The storm was getting closer every minute; and when the rain hit, the cows would drift with it. If he left them alone too long, they might wander back into the morass where it was really deep and all be lost.

WHEN he got back to the two stuck cows, he looked them over carefully. They were both big Holsteins. One was farther out in the bog than the other, and he decided to work on the closest one first. He left the pony ground-hitched, fastened one end of his lariat to a small stump at the very edge of the bog, then stepped down into the stinking ooze. It came to his knees, above them, to his hips, and then he was on solid bottom. It was almost impossible to lift a foot out of the stuff, but after a long effort, he managed to take five steps, and he was beside the cow. He got down in the mud now, up to his shoulders, and lying on one side, began to work his rope-end under the cow just back of her forelegs. When he had pushed it as far as he could, he waded around to the other side, rammed his arm into it again, and felt for the rope. By the time he found it, he was coated to his chin with the muck. He pulled the slimy rope snugly about her and made his tie. Then he worked his way back to the ridge, pulled himself up, and sat for a moment to rest. Then he wiped his hands with palmetto fronds and brush, and dallied the clean end of the rope to his saddle-horn.

Now, down in the ooze again, he got behind the cow. He whistled to the pony and twisted the cow's tail. The pony took the pull, and the Holstein gave three lunges, and refused to try any more. She was now turned so she was headed toward the ridge, but that was all that had been accomplished.

Tommy Cypress once more tugged himself out of the sticky blackness. This time to go look after the herd. As he slogged toward the pony, she looked him over and snorted doubtfully.

Coated with the black slime, as he was, it sickened him to step into the clean tooled saddle, but there was nothing else for it.

He found the others still bunched and grazing contentedly. He hurried back and began gathering up brush and palmetto fans and small branches. He tromped these into the mud in front of the cow to give her footing. When he had finished, it was time to go check on the herd again.

The cows were beginning to get nervous. Two had strayed, and he brought these in and tightened all of them into a close bunch, then dashed back to the swamp.

He got a sapling pole and trimmed it with his pocket knife. He got down into the bog and worked it under the cow's chest. When he was ready he whistled to the pony; she took the pull; he lifted with the pole and they helped the Holstein a couple of feet closer to the ridge.

Tommy Cypress kept at the job until, finally, he was compelled to take a breather. He flung his arms over the cow and put his head on her clean back and let hot fatigue drain from him. He thought about what Mr. Knowles had told him about looking after every single cow. He set grimly to work again.

Two hours with pony and rope and pry-pole, of wallowing in the

***Illustrated by* John Costigan, N.A.**



slime, and hurrying out to bunch the herd and back, gave the weary Seminole boy one cow freed and the other one partly so.

All the earth was wilding now, and the low-hung sky was the color of dried moss. Wind was up there clawing the frightened clouds to shreds, and down here he rumbled angrily above the swamp, hit at it in hard bursts, then spun away and circled it and came hurrying back to plunge in through the forest top and finger among the ground growth.

In another hour Tommy Cypress was well on the way to having the second cow free. His rope was around her and secured to the saddle horn and he was hip-deep in the bog, with his slimy pole under her, when it happened.

A DEAD tree caught a hard thump from Wind and came crashing down into the swamp, not a dozen feet from the pony. The little mare screamed and reared and put her weight and her strength against the rope. The rope held but the cinch didn't. She unsaddled herself in one jump, and went pounding down the hogback, headed for home.

Tommy Cypress climbed up onto the ridge and sat down to rest and clean his hands. The disappointment that was a dry, burning knot in his throat would have brought tears a couple of years ago. Now he just stared at his hands, then out at the helpless cow. Well, there was nothing he could do for her now. He put the saddle blanket in a hollow tree and went in a dog-trot out to the herd. If he moved fast, he could still get them to the fenced pasture, which was about three miles farther, before dark. Then he would walk to some ranch, borrow a horse, and come back and work with the cow.

That was the way he planned it. But when he got to the herd, he saw it wasn't going to be like that. He would just have to stay awhile now. Or should he? He knelt by the young Jersey and rubbed her face and her neck. She lay quietly, patiently. She was a beautiful young cow. Tommy Cypress couldn't decide what was the best thing to do; he mustn't do the wrong thing now, he just mustn't.

The rain took this moment to send the first waves of its fury across the lowlands. It came in great gray ruffles that flared and lashed madly. Tommy Cypress hurried back and got the saddle blanket and spread it over the Jersey's neck and face, giving her some slight protection.

The other cows were setting up a clamor of nervous bawling. Tommy Cypress stood up and took a sweeping look toward the west. He got a dim glimpse of a hammock; then the rain curtained it off. That would be Coconut Hammock; the high pasture was almost two miles beyond that.

He should take the herd on and leave the Jersey—he knew that; but in this storm, he might not be able to get back to her. He looked down at her then, and knew he had to stay here. He had to. This was going to be the prize. Mr. Knowles and the hands had talked about it. They claimed it would be a bull calf, sure, and some day he would be a champion. Tommy Cypress couldn't leave the champion to this rain and—

The herd had started drifting with the storm, and he had to hurry to bunch them. He walked round and round them until he had worked them into such a tight huddle, their sides were touching. They quieted some then.

He came and looked down at the Jersey again and made his decision. He would stay with her for just a little longer. He would keep close watch on the daylight and stay till the very last minute that he dared, then go fast.

Again it didn't work out as he planned it. The young cow needed him, and he stayed with her. When he stood up with Calf in his arms, wrapped in the saddle blanket, he knew he had stayed too long.

He took quick measure of his predicament, and saw a foolish Indian boy who should never have been trusted with the care of thousands of dollars' worth of cows. He had got them trapped on the lowlands by a smashing, shrieking hurricane that was increasing in intensity every hour. And he could have saved them all except the Jersey and the one in the bog.

With Calf in his arms, he began moving the herd, the young mother with them, toward Coconut Hammock, knowing that he would never make it. Night would soon be stalking the earth now, and it was taking minutes, he found, to go a hundred yards. The storm had the cows so excited he had to keep on the run, pushing at them, shouting at them, trying to keep them headed in the right direction. After a while, it came to him that he didn't know which was the right direction. He gave it up. Darkness was taking over, and burdened with the weight of Calf, he was too tired to keep up the slogging through the beaten, tangled grass.

He herded the worried animals onto the highest patch of ground he could find, and worked with them until they were well bunched and standing with their rumps to the storm. With the coming of darkness, they quieted, and he moved among them milking the ones that needed it. When he had finished, he put Calf where his mother could nuzzle him, and wedged himself in between cows.

He listened to the roar of the storm and felt the pressure of hunger and loneliness such as he had never known in all his life before.

With the hours, the storm built to a terrific force. Tommy Cypress counted off the time in his mind, and at about four in the morning he could feel the hurricane approaching its peak. The radio had said the dead-calm center would come along here about daylight this morning. Daylight time couldn't be far off now.

Shortly after that was when he realized the water around his ankles was getting too deep to be only rain water. He checked it by feel for an hour. Then, with the nausea of stark fear in him, he knew what it was.

Old Big Water—old Okeechobee, the meanest lake in the world, was again spreading out over the lowlands. Tommy Cypress knew about that other time, nineteen years ago, two years before he was born. Bad Wind had come, like now, and he blew Lake Okeechobee right out of banks onto land, and washed death over more than a thousand people and many thousands of head of stock. Now Wind was going to do it again; going to wash death over all who were caught on lowlands—over Tommy Cypress and his cows.

He thought of Mr. Knowles and all the other ranches and farmers who would lose their crops and their stock. He thought about the ten thousand people the trains had taken to safety, and he was glad for them. He was glad he was the only one caught out here with black fury and hunger and loneliness—and creeping death.

SEMINOLE boy watched the coming of the wild old man that was the dawn. The light of this day didn't come from the east; it didn't come from any direction. It just appeared. There was nothing—then it was there. Making light. Very dull light.

Like your mind, Tommy Cypress thought. *When you are born, there is nothing. Then, without your even knowing it, your mind begins to work for you, making light for you. And sometimes words come to you from way back there when your thinking first started. I know some words like that—but I don't know where I heard them, nor who spoke them. Maybe some aged Micco, some aged leader at green corn dance spoke them to the clan when I was early child. Anyhow, they are there, in my mind. Let me see. . . . Once I remembered all of them.*

The ancestral words were weighty and somber things in the Seminole language, clumsy to handle in his mind. The nearest to a literal translation he could give them was: *Men*



Two hours with pony and rope and pry-pole, gave the boy one cow freed, the other partly so.

must live as the sun and the moon . . . each making light for the other.

After a moment of thinking about them, he put the words out of his mind. Maybe they meant something to his ancestors. They meant nothing to him.

Calf was finished at the udder now, and the water was almost up to his back. He was afraid again and letting out his frantic-crow kind of sounds. Tommy Cypress put him where his mother could reach him, and stood looking down at the pitifully frightened little animal. Only ten hours old, yet it knew the fear of death.

Suddenly Tommy Cypress stood straight and fierce and turned his face to the wild storm. For a short, bright-hot moment the cutting edge of utter fear took him, too, and he let small-boy tears fill his eyes and his throat.

Wind was stomping around and screaming happily about that. He hurled his rain pellets and beat the flood waters into waves and flung the waves at Tommy Cypress and his cows and his calf, taunting him because he was still *is-to-tchi*, still baby that would cry. Tommy Cypress flashed defiant, his lips firmed, and he put small-boy tears away forever. The man Tommy Cypress calmly defied the storm and the death it was bringing.

Men must live as the sun and the moon—each making light for the other.

Those words wouldn't leave him alone.

The water was lapping at Calf's ears, and he was bawling shrilly. Tommy Cypress picked him up, wrapped him in the saddle blanket and held him in his arms. Calf stopped his frightened sounds immediately, and his mother quieted too.

Tommy Cypress had to smile at how Calf felt so secure with him. Then futility, rough and harsh, sounded in him. What difference did it make if Calf drowned now, or in ten minutes, or in twenty minutes? What difference did anything make?

He checked the water. It was halfway between his knees and his waist and seemed to be coming up faster. If the Okeechobee dikes went out all at once, it could be over his head here in a very short time.

At that moment he became aware of the storm's slackening. That meant the calm center of the hurricane was coming, like the radio had said. It was good luck for Tommy Cypress that it had not come till it was light, for he might be able to see a safe place to go to now. For twenty or thirty minutes, during the calm, the rain would stop and Wind would go dead. But when the calm passed, Wind would come again, in chunks at first, then the back-side of the hurricane would strike with a violence even greater than before.

He would have only those few minutes to get to safety. But safety where? How far was it to Coconut Hammock? Given time, he could swim to it, if he found the water too deep for wading, even if it were two or three miles away. But he couldn't swim that far in twenty minutes, and if he started and the returning storm caught him out there in a sea of flood water he wouldn't have a chance.

Wind was weakening fast, like he was getting weary of his own fierceness. Tommy Cypress began trying to stomp away the numbness that fatigue and hours in the water had put into his legs, while he searched the slackening rain for sight of Coconut Hammock. The waters covered the land as far as he could see.

Finally he located the hammock, a dim island a half-mile away. There were only a few bent pines left standing on it, but it was safety.

Tommy Cypress wasn't going to drown after all. Everything was all right. The little-boy tears stirred deep in his chest again, but he killed them by not thinking about them. He could wade to the hammock in just a few minutes, or swim it if he had to. But he'd have to get going.

The dikes must have all gone out, for the water was rising faster now.

It was moving up the sides of the cows, and they all stood like soaked statues, unaware of the death that was hurrying to them. Nothing could induce them to move from here. Cattle were like that.

Tommy Cypress had a crazy thought that maybe they felt so secure because he was with them, maybe they had a dumb faith in him. But that was senseless. Cows didn't do that kind of thinking. He looked at the awkward, long-legged calf in his arms. He couldn't deny Calf's faith in him. Calf expected to be taken care of.

And what about Mr. Knowles, Tommy Cypress? He expects you to take care of all the cows. You sent out to prove yourself to him. This was going to be your chance to do that. Now what are you going to do, go back and tell Mr. Knowles you left his prize stock to drown? Sure, he would expect you to save yourself, but after you had done your best to save his cows. And have you done your best?



THOSE somber Seminole words were still nudging at Tommy Cypress' mind, and he kept thinking of his duty to Mr. Knowles, to the cows, and to the knobby-kneed calf. He noticed fleetingly that, thinking of these things, and how the rain had stopped and there was not a whisper of a breeze, the dull fear-sickness had quit hurting inside him.

Coconut Hammock showed clearly now, and it was easily a half-mile away. It would be impossible for him ever to drive the cows to it, hampered with the calf as he was. Even without the calf, he figured he couldn't do it, because they would simply refuse to start out into all that water without something more than that distant clump of green to aim for.

He studied the hammock. If he could wade it, he could save Calf all right, but that didn't take care of twenty-two valuable cows. Or did it? There was maybe a wild chance that it did.

He went to work. He tossed Calf across his mother's back, giving her such a start she would probably have done something about it if she hadn't been wedged in between the others. Calf set up a crazy hoarse bawling at such treatment. Tommy Cypress held him with his left hand, and with his right got his pocket-knife out, opened it with his teeth, and cut strips off the saddle blanket and tied Calf's legs. First the back ones, then the front ones, and he was ready to start.

He didn't know whether his scheme would work or not, but this was it—this was his best effort. He had been looking too close to his own *chikee* to see his duty, but it was plain now. You just did your best for the other fellow, no matter what the circumstances. He was smiling as he lifted Calf and put him across his back, hindlegs over one shoulder and front legs over the other.

Tommy Cypress might have been one of his ancestors stepping out of the past, a mighty hunter, homeward bound with his deer.

He studied the water ahead for a moment, let the mother cow get a good look at what was happening to her calf, and headed for the hammock. If he had to swim for it, he had tied Calf's legs with jerk knots so he could free him quickly and let him have his chance at swimming, which he probably wouldn't be able to do at his age. Calf kept filling the wet stillness with his blaring, and his mother kept bawling nervously back at him. And that was good.

Tommy Cypress didn't know how many minutes of the calm period might be gone, but he had a long way to go. Of a sudden he stepped into a depression, and the water jumped up to his chin. He groped with his feet for high ground, found it, and the water went back down to his armpits. Calf stopped his bawling only long enough to snort the water out of his nose.

Without any warning, a big clump of Wind dropped out of the overhead and spread over the water. A chill twirled between Tommy Cypress' shoulderblades. It couldn't be that the calm was almost gone all ready. But that's what it was, for another gust struck him with a hard shove like an angry man.

He waded as fast as he could, but the weight of Calf, the entangling grass, and thirty hours without sleep were having their effect on his legs. He forced himself to count his steps so he wouldn't think about his tiredness. Another burst of Wind, harder this time, came rolling across the water, scuffing up the surface.

Tommy Cypress was making fairly good time, when a little ridge he had been following ended, and he went under. He scrambled onto a grass clump but couldn't stay on it. He went to his knees. He fought desperately to get back on his feet, but couldn't. He was ready to let go of Calf when he did manage to get one foot on the solid, then the other. He pushed hard, and was once more head and shoulders above water.

CALF wasn't making a sound now. Tommy Cypress stopped and joggled him up and down on his shoulders until, finally, he began to cough in a half-strangled fashion. Tommy Cypress hurried on. As soon as Calf got



Tommy Cypress realized the water was getting too deep to be only rain. With the nausea of stark fear, he knew what it was.

over his strangling, he let out a shrill, desperate bellow. Tommy Cypress looked back at the cows.

"That did it, champion," he told the calf.

The mother cow had left the bunch and was headed this way, her eyes on them, and stern purpose in her manner. Tommy Cypress tried to wade faster. He certainly didn't want an excited, angry cow attacking him out here in breast-deep water. The grass pulled at his legs, and he had to keep feeling ahead for each step, but the hammock was getting closer. It was still a good way off, but closer.

When he noticed that the bawling of the other cows had stopped, he looked back, and they were all following Calf's mother. It had worked. His scheme had worked.

Calf's mother wasn't more than fifty feet behind him when the water started getting steadily shallower, and the ground kept rising all the way to the hammock. When he reached it, he strode rapidly through brush and palmettos to the center of the island. He had Calf untied when the anxious mother came tearing through the brush in search of them.

The hammock was a beaten tangle of soggy undergrowth and strewn coconuts and broken and uprooted palm trees. There were a few tired pines standing, and the returning storm was already shaking them violently.

Tommy Cypress stepped up onto a fallen palm to see how the other cows were doing, and Wind knocked him off. He got a prod stick and hurried off to meet the cows and herd them into a bunch in the center of the island. He had trouble with them because they were hungry and bent on foraging. But when the storm was at gale force they were satisfied to stand, and again Tommy Cypress hurriedly milked the ones that needed it.

Now that the stock was safe, he was feeling the terrific drag of fatigue and hunger. He shucked two coconuts with his pocket-knife, ate his fill of the meat, then went back to the cows and stripped the milkers and drank five shellfuls of warm milk. Then, pawing his way through the howling gale, he went to a fallen palm, and searched under it with his prod stick. During flood times in the 'glades the snakes made for the high spots. He found two rattlers and threw them away. Seminole never kills rattler.

He stuffed some brush and palm fronds in under the big bole, spread the saddle blanket and crawled into the shelter. And while the back-side of a tropical hurricane howled across the hammock island, spewed rain that hit like birdshot, built waves out on the flood waters and shattered them into spray, the exhausted young Seminole slept.

Voices woke him. He looked out and saw Mr. Knowles and one of the hands. They had come in the outboard, he knew. He rolled out from under the tree.

The storm had been over for quite a while, for there were some spots that were wearing thin in the clouds.

Mr. Knowles was up on a fallen tree counting the cows, which were scattered all over the island, searching for grass.

The other man saw Tommy Cypress and said: "There he is."

Mr. Knowles looked at Tommy Cypress in his customary indifferent way, then looked back at the cows. "All safe, huh?" he asked.

"No sir," Tommy Cypress said. "I lose one in bog. When pony run away."

Mr. Knowles looked down at him and said: "Only one, huh? Good! That's the Jersey's calf? You saved it too?"

Tommy Cypress nodded, grinning.

Mr. Knowles looked at the other man and said: "Huh! A boy taking care of a man's property so good." He stepped down from the tree. "I'll have a look."

He stalked through the ground growth for a look at Calf, but he didn't get that far. Calf's mother saw to that.

Tommy Cypress went and picked Calf up and brought him for Mr. Knowles to see him.

When Tommy Cypress was in the boat with the men, and they were on their way to get feed for the cows, Mr. Knowles grinned at him and handed him a wrapped sandwich. It was the first time Tommy Cypress had ever seen him grin.

"You made out good, boy," he said. "We managed to save most of the stuff at the place." He was silent for a moment, looking at Tommy Cypress; then he said, above the sound of the motor: "Tommy, when school starts, we'll have that motorcycle business."

Tommy Cypress couldn't say anything. He couldn't even swallow the bite of sandwich he had taken. When he finally got it down, he said: "Thank you, sir." Then he sat with his sandwich in his hands, just looking at it.

When great happiness was in Tommy Cypress it always curled up in a lump in the top of his stomach and kept kicking its legs out straight, like a rain-frog swimming. The rain-frog was swimming now. Hard.



THE MAN WHO WROTE "THE FORTUNE OF GRANDFATHER EPP" AND "TWENTY-FIVE CATS" IS AT HIS BEST IN THIS NEW COMEDY OF THE RANCH COUNTRY.

Only *the* Brave

by OWEN CAMERON

MISS EDITH ELLIOT'S father and five brothers brought her to the dances, and watched her every minute; and in three years the closest Archer had come to proposing was to ask her how she liked the weather. Anyone else might have been discouraged, but Archer's mind moved too slowly to be changed often, and he kept hoping for a miracle. He danced with her at the dances, of course; but he couldn't talk to her and count time at once; and if he stopped dancing, one of her brothers would come up, scowling, and ask what was going on, and maybe take Miss Edith away with him.

Archer almost managed to pop the question the night Pete Flynn blew up his goat. Sometime before, the Government had sent Pete a booklet saying there was money in milch goats, and Pete sent off for two that never made him a penny, but cost him something in shirts they ate, and so forth. The Government went on collecting taxes from Pete, claiming goats were not deductible, which made Pete so mad he tried to sue the Department of Agriculture for using the mails to defraud, but no lawyer had the nerve to take the case.

The two goats followed Pete every place he went, even to the dances, and one night they and Pete were ruled off the floor. Then Pete begged a stick of dynamite and started the goats homeward, figuring to set off the dynamite behind them and scare them so they'd stay home. But the he-goat turned back and picked up the stick and trotted after Pete like a retriever dog, scattering sparks from the fuse. Folks in the dance-hall heard Pete running and hollering blue murder; and when the dynamite went off, they all rushed outside to see what had happened, leaving Archer alone with Miss Edith for the first time.

He almost missed his chance, and started out with the others; but he fell or was tripped, though afterward he couldn't remember anyone near enough but Miss Edith, who wouldn't do anything so unladylike as tripping a man. Archer scrambled to his knees, a little stunned, and it took him a minute to realize they were alone.

Miss Edith gave him a shake and said: "Archer, there's nobody here but us. Did I—did you fall too hard? Can you talk?"

"Uh," said Archer, and he stared around the empty hall. "Miss Edith, ma'am—uh—miss, I got something to say to you. Something I wanted to say for a long time."

"Yes, Archer?"

"I never could tell you when we were dancing, account of having to keep time; but I've thought this over, what I would say if ever we were alone, which seemed unlikely. So you see this is no sudden idea of mine, because on my lonely ranch I have often thought—uh—thought about it."

"Yes, Archer? You thought about what?" asked Miss Edith, looking toward the door.

"Uh? What I'm telling you. Now you got me off the track, interrupting like that." Archer mumbled for a minute, getting started again, and then went on. "On my lonely ranch I get lots of time to think, except at lambing and shearing, and on my lonely ranch, I naturally think of—uh—of it."

Two of Miss Edith's brothers ran in, hollering for her and wanting to know what was going on, hitching up their

pants and spitting on their hands as they closed in on Archer. Miss Edith quickly said Archer had fallen down and stunned himself and was just coming to, and might be hurt pretty bad. Archer got to his feet, groaning, and had to pretend to be lame the rest of the evening, which meant he couldn't dance again with Miss Edith.

Archer saw that if he had been prepared and ready with a shorter speech, he would have been able to say his say and get an answer, and he memorized a few lines to have ready in case Pete blew up the other goat. In fact, he hinted to Pete that it would be a good idea, but Pete said no. Not only had he ruined a valuable goat that was more like a brother, if only a man had a market for the milk, but he had almost ruined himself, and would have if the goat had run faster, which it easily could have. Pete thought the goat ran slow on purpose, and sadly told Archer: "I believe he realized. You might say that goat gave his life for mine; greater love hath no man."

ARCHER saw he couldn't count on Pete, and would have to think of some other way of getting rid of the Elliot boys and the old man. Some folks hinted that the Elliots were afraid of eating their own cooking, was the reason they wouldn't let a man near Miss Edith; but the truth was that her older sister had run off with a medicine show, and called herself Mrs. White Elk, though the medicine man's name was Raintree, and he wasn't an Indian, let alone an Elk, and had a wife and four kids, so he couldn't marry anybody else without committing bigamy. Old man Elliot said he wasn't going to have another such scandal in the family, though any time Miss Edith found a man good enough, she could get hitched with his blessing. Meantime he wasn't going to have any carryings-on, by which he appeared to mean letting a man come within a mile of her, except at dances.

Some of her partners talked to Miss Edith while they danced, and Archer had tried to do the same, but when he got on the floor with Miss Edith sort of floating around him, his heart beat so loud it interfered with the music. He might have managed if there had been a good loud drum in with the fiddles and accordion; but as it was, his conversations went like this:

"Well, how do you like this weather, Miss Edith, ma'am? One-two-three-four. One-two—pret-ty-warm—three-four. Miss-Edith two-three-four-one-two-three-four. What two-three-four? One-two-three-four."

Then that dance would be over, and someone else would claim Miss Edith for a partner. Her brothers saw to it that she didn't dance twice with any man, and when the music wasn't playing, one or two of them sat on each



side of her. It was hard to say flowery things past a man weighing two hundred pounds and smelling of horses; and when Archer wasn't dancing he sat by himself, trying to memorize speeches that could be said in counts of four, or trying to invent some way of getting everybody to run out of the hall again, or have them fall over paralyzed for five minutes by breathing a secret gas he might invent. Once he sent off for a book that told how to hypnotize people, and tried it on an unbroken bronc—but it only bit him; and then on Pete Flynn. Pete thought Archer had the delirium tremens and grabbed him. Pete never held it against Archer for breaking his nose, because he never gave up the idea that Archer was out of his head, and still talked about the time Archer saw snakes.

It seemed to Archer that something like exploding a goat was his best chance, but he felt sure that the next time dynamite went off, the Elliots would either take Miss Edith along, or one of them would stay to keep an eye on her. They had been suspicious since the other time, though Archer had taken care to limp around the country for a week.

Archer realized he would have to think up something louder and more startling than detonating a goat. It took him seven months to do it, and the strain pulled him down to a hundred and eighty, so that everybody noticed how peaked he looked and recommended tonics, most of which Archer tried, just to be agreeable, though they all tasted miserable.

He made his arrangements to be alone with Miss Edith at the dance in September. All evening he stood around practicing what to say to Miss Edith, moving his lips and rolling his eyes in a way that worried Pete Flynn.

Exactly at midnight there was a burst of shooting outside, and fifty Indians that Archer had hired off the reservation stampeded past the hall, whooping and banging guns. Next the full case of giant powder went off, and two old wagons soaked in oil went up in flames, and there was a terrible screaming, as though the Indians were scalping an entire Sunday School at once; and Pete Flynn's burros joined in, which was unplanned but a big help.

Everybody rushed out of the hall except Archer, and he held on to Miss Edith, which she made easy by flinging her arms around him and begging



"Archer, did I—did you fall too hard? Can you talk?"

him to protect her, which Archer said he would.

"There is nothing to worry about," Archer told her, and quickly explained how he had arranged this to get rid of everyone else so that he could talk to her.

"It was the best I could do," Archer said modestly. "A war might have been better, but even if it happened in time, chances are it wouldn't happen close enough to do any good, and maybe not even on a Saturday night when there was a dance."

"But that dreadful screaming!" cried Miss Edith, holding him tighter than ever.

"Seven little pigs under a gate. Also McGregor, from over at Crazy Woman, with his bagpipes. Also, the old sow fighting to get out and rescue the pigs, or Mac, or both. So don't be scared."

"I wouldn't be afraid of anything, with your arms around me," Miss Edith said, though it was the other way round, Archer having let go of her to look in his pockets for some notes he had made. He couldn't find them, and time was passing, so he went ahead from memory:

"Miss Edith, for a long time I have admired you, here, and from afar on my lonely ranch, which isn't a bad place, as you know. I have thought of you and dreamed of you, as the poet says, though a man who works hard don't dream much, and I have hoped and prayed for a chance like this—"

"They'll be back any minute," Miss Edith warned.

"Yes ma'am. And like I was saying —uh—what was I saying?"

"You said you were lonely and your house needed the woman's touch and would I—would I—"

"Would you marry me?" cried Archer. "Yes or no?"

Being a woman, Miss Edith was unable to say anything without beating around the bush first. She told Archer: "This is so sudden, Archer, I hardly know what to say."

"Yes ma'am. Just say yes or no."

"I'm all aflutter. I won't say I never suspected anything, but a girl can't ever be sure, and of course even when she is sure, she can't know if the man's intentions are honorable unless he speaks up, like that fake Indian my sister—"

"McGregor's let the wind out," Archer said. "Yes or no?"

Old man Elliot arrived panting in the doorway. He glared at Archer a moment and then yelled: "Boys! Come running! It's him again!"

Four of the boys came through the door, partly wrecking it, and Archer headed for a window. Looking back over his shoulder, he yelled, "Which is it?" and saw Miss Edith's lips move, but he couldn't hear her answer over her brothers' bellowing.



Archer galloped out of the house, packing Miss Edith. Then she screamed: "Oh, Archer, run! It's them!"

Archer got away all right, and lay out in the sagebrush until the sun came up and he could see the dance was over and everyone gone home. He felt a little guilty for having run away from Miss Edith, but he consoled himself by thinking that he hadn't heard her answer, and if she had said no, they weren't even engaged. At the same time he knew he couldn't rest until he knew for sure what she had said, and he trudged back to the dance-hall wondering how he was going to find out.

He was still half a mile away when a man came sneaking out from the building toward him. It was Pete Flynn, looking grave and impressive, and he made Archer lie down behind a greasewood, so he wouldn't get shot.

"Shot?" Archer sounded bewildered. "The Indians don't take money that serious, and I thought McGregor agreed to wait until I got my wool—"

"It ain't none of them," Pete said. "One of the Elliot boys is laying where he can watch your car. He's got my old .45-90, which I didn't have no choice but to lend after they took it. And Miss Edith packed off home crying her eyes out, and the boys and old Elliot hunting you—and reason enough, I guess. Archer, I never thought you'd take an advantage of a innocent little heifer like her, drunk or sober. Though I knew last night you was only two drinks from a snake, and should have grabbed you."

"Wait a minute," Archer said. "Somebody's made a mistake. There's no reason they should be hunting me with guns."

"I realize you don't remember a thing about it, and that's the only reason I come out to warn you, instead of letting you walk to your doom you deserve. Molesting an innocent flower like Miss Edith, and Lord knows what else."

"Holy smoke," Archer said. "Is that what people think?"

"That's what they think, if it's what you're thinking. Old lady Purcell, she said no matter what happened, it was too good for you, and there was plenty to say amen. To take advantage of a helpless female woman—"

"I never!" Archer cried.

"How do you know? You don't remember."

"I do remember! Pretty well," Archer said. "I will admit I was kind of



excited, it being the first time I proposed, or even talked to her alone, except that other time, and then I was kind of dizzy from hitting the floor so hard. It's a little hazy in spots, but I remember enough to know for sure I didn't do nothing wrong."

"You just think you remember," Pete told him. "I been in the same boat myself. The best thing you can do is light out of this country while you're able. You know old man Elliot and the boys—they won't listen to no excuses nor apologies. They're mean, and they are stubborn, and they'll go over this country with a fine-tooth comb till they get a tooth for a tooth. You hit for foreign parts—Canada or Mexico or California. You can take my car as far as the railroad."

ARCHER studied for a while; then he said: "I always heard marriage was a serious thing, but it's hard to believe it can be as serious as you say."

"There's only one thing more serious than being shot," Pete told him. "And that's being chased by a loaded goat. And when the Elliots is doing the shooting, I don't know but what it's more serious."

"I won't leave the country under a cloud. Why should I run off? I'm innocent as a lamb."

"I'll sell your sheep and so forth," Pete said. "Better under a cloud than under a blanket, Archer."

"Furthermore, I got to see Miss Edith," Archer insisted. "I got to know whether we're engaged or not, so's I will know if she's waiting."

Pete shook his head. "I'm telling you, they're scouring the country with a fine-tooth comb. There's no place they won't look, and every one of them armed. You wouldn't be safe in your own house."

"Hah!" Archer cried. "If they're all out hunting me, they can't be home, so I'd be safe in *their* house, wouldn't I? And Miss Edith ought to be there, and I can find out if she said yes or no. There's certain things an engaged man don't do, and maybe I'd get as far as some big city like Yuma and want to."

Pete argued and reasoned with him, but once Archer had an idea in his head, it couldn't be pried out, but had to work itself out, no matter how painful, like a porcupine quill. Finally they went to the coulee where Pete had hidden his car, and Archer got in and started the motor. Pete shook hands and said good-by, and told Archer he'd as soon lose the other goat as a good friend like Archer, and also to watch the second gear, which jumped out.

Archer drove across the desert toward the Elliot place, meeting nothing but a couple of cows along the way. The Elliots were close neighbors of Archer's. The two houses were less than ten miles apart, and Archer had often been there, helping with branding and other exchange work, but this was the first time he had ever driven into the yard without the old man or one of the boys showing up at once to keep an eye on him and see that he didn't go near the kitchen until they all went in to dinner.

The old man might have taken Miss Edith with him, to keep an eye on her, but Archer hoped not. He rapped on the back door and heard a stir inside the house, and for the first time it occurred to him that one of the boys might have stayed home, and he backed toward Pete's car.

It was Miss Edith who opened the door. She stared at him and whispered: "Oh, Archer!"

"Yessum," Archer said. "I didn't hear what you answered last night. Yes or no?"

"Oh, Archer! Come right in."

"Well, uh—is it all right? What I mean, is it safe?"

"They're all off hunting you with guns, and left me home alone crying my eyes out, not knowing whether I'd ever see you again on this earth, just as you'd got to the point where—They were awful mad, but I guess they didn't find you, did they?"

"No ma'am—miss. That is, yes or no?" Archer asked, letting her pull him into the kitchen and push him into a chair.

"Pa always said he'd amputate the first man ever to lay a hand on me, and I told him you didn't, exactly, but he said he believed his own eyes."

"Yessum. Did you say yes or no?"

"Yes, yes, *yes*," cried Miss Edith, getting on Archer's lap and putting her arms around him and kissing him. "Oh, Archer, after all these years!"

When she kissed him, Archer heard a humming in his ears, and the second time it was louder. Then he real-



"There is nothing to worry about," Archer told her, and quickly explained.

ized that the humming was not inside his head, but outside, and stood up so abruptly that Miss Edith would have fallen off, only for having a good grip on his neck. That reminded Archer that they were engaged, and though he could have made better time alone, he galloped out of the house, packing Miss Edith. When she saw a car raising dust on the road, she screamed:

"Oh, Archer, run! It's them!"

Archer got into Pete's car, still holding Miss Edith, and drove away from the house in the opposite direction. Looking back, he saw the car stop beside the house, and four men piled out. Three stared after him while the fourth—old man Elliot, from his size—ran indoors. A moment later he ran out, waving his arms, and the car started jerkily.

Miss Edith screamed: "Here they come! Faster, Archer, faster!"

Archer was already pressing the gas-pedal to the floor, and Miss Edith calmed down a little when she saw her family wasn't going to catch them right away. Pete's car was no faster or slower than the Elliots' machine, and once they were on the main road, the distance between them stayed about the same, except at gates. The country was open and level as a floor; but way off in the hazy distance was the county seat. Archer felt that if he reached there, he might lose his pursuers among the streets. . . .

Two clouds of dust rolled up into the blue sky behind the cars, coming closer and then separating again at the gates. There was a gate every eight or ten miles. Miss Edith couldn't drive, so she had to open the gates, and close them again, of course, so that the Elliots would have to stop too. Waiting while Miss Edith opened a gate and the other car rushed down on them made Archer's nerves curl and uncurl like singed snakes. When he drove through and waited for her to fasten the gate, only his manhood and the fact that he would have to manage the next one himself kept Archer from leaving her.

Archer and Miss Edith were hollering without realizing it. While Archer bent over the wheel, she would lean sideways and look backwards, screaming: "Now they've stopped! Oh, we're gaining again. Faster, Archer, go faster! Here they come again —can't you go faster?"

"I'm as innocent as the day is long," Archer told the Sheriff. "It's just that appearances are against me."

The Elliots had a couple of strong men to handle each gate; but on the other hand they weren't as quick as Miss Edith, who could run like an antelope, and frequently had to, not to lose Archer. The Elliots didn't gain any until about thirty miles from town, when their car roared through a gate without slowing to pick up the brother who had opened it. At the next gate another boy was left, though he grabbed at the car as it raced past, and was knocked sprawling in the road. Miss Edith chewed her knuckles and begged Archer to go faster, before they were killed.

The second car was so near now that Miss Edith could recognize her brother Carmichael with her father, but they didn't gain any more, because if the old man abandoned Carmichael, he'd have to open gates himself. They roared into town with the Elliots so close that Archer could hear their shouts, and he couldn't shake them among the streets, though he drove round and round, from Main Street to River Street and back again.

"No matter what happens, I love you, Archer," screamed Miss Edith.

"It won't happen if I can help it," Archer howled back, just missing a burro that had been browsing near the courthouse.

"At least we can die together," she wailed, trying to kiss Archer, but missing him by a foot as they turned another corner. Dying together seemed mighty unsatisfactory to Archer, and he would have said so, but the motor of Pete's car sputtered, hung fire, started again, sighed gently, and died.



"We're out of gas," Archer howled.

Miss Edith stood up in the car, pointing ahead and screeching: "There's a gas station!"

There were two, a yellow one and a blue one, but Archer knew there was

Illustrated by John Fulton



no time for buying gas, and bore down on the brakes with all his weight. Pete's car slid to a stop and the Elliots rolled past, looking back and yelling. Archer jumped out and hit the street running, but then he remembered he was an engaged man, and he would not abandon the woman he loved. He turned back to rescue Miss Edith, and ran head-on into old man Elliot, who wrapped his arms around Archer and fell on him. Carmichael came up, panting, and they dragged Archer to Pete's car and sat him on the running-board.

When her father pulled a long pistol out of his overalls, Miss Edith wept and begged him not to harm Archer. She said she didn't care what he did to her, but please spare Archer.

"You shut up," growled the old man, holding the pistol against Archer's nose. "If you have ruined two lives this day, you got only yourself to thank for it."

Archer sat with his eyes closed, because looking down the barrel of the pistol made him uneasy. He muttered: "Miss Edith wasn't to blame. It was all my fault, if any."

"No, Archer, honey," sobbed Miss Edith. "Don't say that. It's my fault. I've been leading you on for three years."

"I don't care whose fault it is," old man Elliot said grimly. "All I know is what I am to do about it."

By this time a dozen or so people had gathered, from all over town—also two burros. A man wearing a badge on his shirt came out of the courthouse and hollered: "What's going on here, Elliot?"

"Never you mind," old man Elliot said. "You 'tend to your business, Sheriff, and I'll 'tend to mine."

"Shooting on the streets is my business," the Sheriff said. "You take that man out of town."

Old man Elliot pointed his pistol at the Sheriff, and a couple of people who knew him well went away. He held on to Archer's shirt collar, so that Archer couldn't have run if he wanted to, which he did.

"You listen to me," the old man said, giving Archer a shake. "This sheepherding son of a dog ruined my daughter, who is there in the car repenting, now that it's too late, and they been carrying-on under my nose three years. I aim to stop it here and now. Today I caught the snake-in-the-grass under my own roof, snapping at my ewe lamb, who liked it."

"Well, now," said the Sheriff, "I didn't know the facts. Go ahead and deal with him as you see fit, Elliot."

"Which I propose to do." The old man prodded Archer with the pistol. "Get up on your hindlegs, you."

Archer stood up, with some help from Carmichael, and Miss Edith let out a wail. "Oh, Archer!"

"I'm as innocent as the day is long," Archer told the Sheriff. "It's just that appearances are against me."

"And that ain't all," the Sheriff said. "Well, let it be a lesson to you. Next time, think twice before you leap."

"There won't be no next time," old man Elliot said. "Carmichael, drag that sniffling sister of yours along. Which way is the justice, Sheriff?"

"Justice of the peace?" Archer asked. "What's he for?"

"Never you mind," old man Elliot growled. "If you think you can lead my daughter astray and then flit on to the next butterfly, you'll find out different. Yes, and I'll see that you stay married, if it kills you."

"Which it has better men," said the Sheriff.

Archer sat down on the running-board again. "Married? Her too? To her, I mean?" He looked at Miss Edith, who stopped crying to listen.

"Your other victims is no concern of mine," growled old man Elliot. "Did you suppose I run you down just to talk? You two will be man and wife before you are an hour older. Get up."

"My legs feel funny," Archer told him. "Like I had water in the knees, or something. I guess somebody'll have to give me a hand."

Miss Edith skipped out of the car, crying: "I'll help you, Archer. You just lean on me."

The old man yelped: "Grab her, Carmichael—you know how she can run! I got a good hold of him. Now, which way is the justice?"

Archer had managed to get on his feet again, and before anyone else could answer, he said: "I know. I asked around and found out more'n three years ago, just in case. You don't need to point that pistol at me, neither. I'll go along peacefully. I'd surely hate to get shot now."



The contents proved surprisingly scanty, being merely little long bags of alligator skin.

The

HOMEWARD BOUND FROM CHINA VIA THE PHILIPPINES, CAPTAIN EZRA COMES TO THE CLIMAX OF HIS FAR ADVENTURINGS AFTER HIS MEETING WITH THE KING OF THE SANDWICH ISLANDS.

EZRA COOPER, owner and master of the ship *Hannah*, now bound from Manila to the Sandwich Islands, was in a hurry. He got himself lathered and shaved, finished dressing, and started for the deck from the mate's port-side cabin he was using temporarily. The decks were swabbed and shipshape, with a steady S.S.E. blow rolling the *Hannah* along briskly. As he mounted to the quarterdeck, he saw no sign of the mate. The ship was no clipper, but was built on old lines, with a raised quarterdeck.

Mr. Brewster, the second mate, met his look of questioning surprise with a brief greeting and explanation.

"Good day, sir. I took over the morning watch; Mr. Potts has the jumps with his bad tooth. He's in his bunk, a-holding rum in his mouth. Wasn't wuth waking you for, sir. I'll pull the tooth for him later on."

"Very good, Mr. Brewster. We needn't wait for eight bells; I'll take over the deck now. Hello! You're a bit off the course—"

"Aye, sir." The other, who had his glass under arm, drew it out and pointed with it. "Just sighted that craft, a couple points to loo'ard. A boat adrift, sir."

Cooper took the glass and focused on the boat. He descried a man in the craft, frantically waving at them.

"Good. You'd better take charge of bringing him in—also his boat; she looks in good shape. We're so close now to the islands we might as well be thrifty. If the wind holds, we should raise the peaks today sure."

He took the trumpet and sent a bellow down the decks for all hands. Mr. Brewster, thus relieved, went into the waist and began preparing tackle to swing man and boat aboard. High time, thought Cooper, he had come on deck. Here Mr. Brewster had been in charge since midnight; and this situation demanded the utmost finesse. . . .

He saw a slender figure appear at the rail and recognized the almost dwarfish Filipino who nominally served him, but in reality worshiped Felicia de Bustamente, who was, also nominally, the ship's passenger.

"Hello, Felipe!" he called. "Fetch the coffee here when it's ready. Any sign of the señorita yet?"

"*Si seguro, señor Capitan!*" floated back response. "She is coming now. I'll have the coffee *pronto.*"

Cooper went smiling to meet her, a song in his heart; each morning brought its own new blessing. She occupied the big main cabin below, the quarters prepared for them both at Manila. There had been no wedding there, however. The intended honeymoon voyage had been turned into a desperate flight over the horizon, with marriage yet to come. Safe under hatches was the Moro gold set aboard as a trap for Cooper and his ship. They had had to drop everything and run to escape the Manila guns. Since the wedding had been thus postponed, Cooper had sworn to himself that the gold should be hers—if he got away with it.

He met her with a kiss, careless of watchers; everyone aboard knew their story—how at the last minute Cooper had learned of the trap; how Felicia had chosen to flee with him, slipping out of the bay by night, and taking along the four boxes of illegal Moro gold that baited the trap.

She was laughing and radiant, cloaked to the heels; the morning wind brought a color to her cheeks, a sparkle to her eye, that he rejoiced to see.

"Good morning, my dear!" Cooper greeted her gayly. "Now that you're here, stay and watch a rescue. Felipe will bring our coffee here; I must keep the deck. Yonder castaway doesn't look the part, I must say!"

MR. BREWSTER had his tackle nearly ready and everyone was at the rail. No glass was needed now. The lone man in the boat looked hale and hearty, was well-dressed, and his craft was notably a good one.

"I'll have to handle the ship," went on Cooper. "We'll send down a man to make fast, then jerk him and his boat aboard."

Felicia stood watching, as Cooper's voice trumpeted down the deck, and the sheer deftness of it was something

Gold-Dust Wedding

by H. BEDFORD-JONES

to see. The crew sprang to the lines; the helmsman spun his wheel cunningly; the *Hannah*, seeming to miss the small boat completely, hung poised as her yards swung—then she lost and made a lee, drifting down upon the small boat under her waist. A sailor went down on a line, taking other lines with him; he made these fast as the canvas drew in again. Scarcely pausing, the ship fell away on her course again, and the boat was brought in athwart her deck and neatly cradled. Mr. Brewster knew his job too.

FELIPE brought the mugs of coffee. Cooper gulped his, watching the rescued man, who came to the quarterdeck. He was well-built, looked about thirty, and spoke English.

"Very neatly done, Skipper!" he cried. "Ye did well to swing in my boat, for which I thank ye. She's worth money to me. I was out fishing yesterday, lost an oar, and got blown off the coast—me, of all men, Shorty Hawkins of Honoruru—or Honolulu, as they're beginning to call it! And if there's anything in the way of trade I can do for ye, count me a friend and obliged for the kindness. Trading is my business."

"You'd better get down to the galley, Mr. Hawkins, and spot a bit o' food," said Cooper, not missing the newcomer's glance at Felicia. "We'll have an introduction all around as soon as I get down there. I see Mr. Potts is coming to take the deck."

Here was Potts, indeed, jaw bundled up, but in his eye a grim intent to stand his duty. Felipe took the newcomer, who was not a particle harmed, down to the galley.

"Better get your land-clothes ready, my dear," Cooper said to Felicia. "We'll be in Hilo tomorrow, and they're a puritanical lot of missionaries thereabouts. I'll talk with this fellow—may find him useful—and can spare him a cabin for tonight."

Sitting with Hawkins in the mess galley, Cooper sized up the man while they talked, and set him down as a sharp, bold pusher. He had been in the Islands for two years, knew the King and the chiefs and missionaries intimately, and was strictly on the make for all there was in it. He was decidedly not to be trusted, yet was the very man Cooper most needed. When Cooper mentioned the other three ships he had bought at Manila, with the four cargoes of presumably spoiled tea, Hawkins slapped his thigh delightedly.

"Blame me if they ain't laying at Honolulu right now! That's the only harbor in the Islands, you know. I've bought me a plantation around the other side of the Island—that's where I was fishing when I got blowed off. Yes sir, your ships been here close to a week—close-mouthed, nobody talking."

Tea? Held over at Manila, presumably spoiled? Hawkins was emphatic here.

"Not a bit of it—maybe spoiled by some standards, not by ours! You gimme a crack at them cargoes, Cap'n; sign a paper right now. I'll guarantee to get top prices for every catty you got aboard—"

Ezra Cooper knew tea prices, and he was astounded at what Hawkins offered; tea was scarce and rarely found here. He promised to talk business later. There was no point in being secretive, since everyone aboard knew that Felicia had eloped with him and that a quantity of gold-dust had come aboard, so he was content with minimizing matters to Hawkins, who claimed to have special trading privileges granted by the island monarch, the third Kamehamea of the name.

What with entering everything on the slate, and transferring old details to the logbook, marking up his dead reckoning, shooting the sun, and taking an unavailing shot at doctoring Mr. Potts' tooth, Cooper saw no more of Felicia until he went down to the main cabin to lunch with her. They usually ate together there, with Felipe serving.

"Hawkins tells me there's a priest at Honolulu—a rare thing in the Islands, which are all in the grip of New England missionaries," Cooper told her. "No priests are allowed there; this one came with a wrecked ship. We must look him up."

"And perhaps help him!" exclaimed Felicia eagerly.

Cooper shrugged. "Perhaps. Anyhow, he'll marry us. We'll sell our tea, put aboard cargo for home, and sail into Newburyport with money in our pockets."

"And then, Ezra?" She gave him a sly twinkle across the table.

"Then? Why, carry on, I s'pose. Oh, I see your point. Marriage isn't the end, it's just the beginning, eh? There'll be troubles, no doubt, bad breaks o' luck, things going wrong as well as right—aye. We'll share all, girl—an equal lay in the cargo."

She beamed. "That's it. That's what I wanted you to say! Not that I want your money, but I want to share equally in the storms and sunshine, my dear. I must go on deck and meet this man Hawkins."

"I'm talking business with him after we've eaten."

SHE smiled, and spoke no more of Hawkins. Cooper was actually on fire to close a deal with the man; he had invoices of the cargo aboard all four of his ships, and a prompt sale for cash would make a tremendous difference in his Manila deal. Tea-clippers rarely came to the Islands; they always made a rush for home to get the best prices there, and he knew Hawkins was also in a fervor for the trade. He was most anxious, however, not to let the man guess his own eagerness.

Further, at this season there were always whalers lying in Honolulu Bay, and from them whale-oil could always be had to lade the ships back to New England, where it had a ready market. So, what with one thing and another, Ezra Cooper could see fat profit in a quick business talk.

He could not talk to himself, however, and Hawkins did not show up. Though he went on deck far more than was his habit, he could see nothing of the man as the day wore on, and he had to watch his skipper's dignity too much to be direct about it and ask questions. Finally, in the heel of the afternoon, he went forward to look at the fore-hatch tarpaulin—and a peal of laughter drew his notice.

They were in the lee of Hawkins' own boat, cocked in the waist—Hawkins and Felicia, talking together like old cronies.

"Mr. Hawkins says he'll arrange for us to meet the King," she sang out to Cooper, as the latter turned to them. "And perhaps he'll come to the wedding!"

"Charming of him." Cooper's voice held an edge. "Hawkins, when do we talk trade?"

Hawkins stammered, in some confusion at Cooper's evident irritation, until Felicia departed, after a hint to Cooper that his present rôle was not becoming. At which Cooper had the sense to abandon it promptly, and grinned at Hawkins.

"Hell, I don't blame you. I'd do the same myself if I had the time and chance! Shall we talk after dinner? We'll be in harbor tomorrow, you know."

So Cooper went to write up the logbook from the slate, and had a lesson learned. But that was not the end of it, for as he was doing his writing in the former main-cabin, Felicia came up behind him.

"Ezra, dear, I'm sorry. I'm glad you're a bit jealous, though. I didn't intend to be mean." He looked up, and she did the appropriate thing. "And if you'll promise not to be more jealous—"

"Definitely." Laughing, he caught her hand. "That's no word for it, really!"

"Well, he is a grubby little man!" She grimaced. "But he was so pleading, he did so want to talk—and I found out what I wanted—where to find that priest, and his name, Father Francis. So will you let that balance all the rest?"

Cooper would, and did. And that evening, after pulling Mr. Potts' tooth, he slung a lantern in his own cubbyhole of a cabin and there talked at length with Shorty Hawkins. Teas and prices were compared with oils and prices; and an agreement was written by which Hawkins undertook to sell the tea cargoes and to replace them with oil—provided any whalers were in harbor from whom the oil could be had. It was a profitable deal all around. Cooper said nothing of the chests of gold-dust aboard; and Hawkins said nothing of having picked up full information from fo'c'stle gossip.

MORNING saw the peaks of Oahu pricking the skies; noon saw them anchored beside their three sister ships, and Mr. Potts' sore jaw easing fast.

The other three skippers immediately came over; Shorty Hawkins went ashore, taking his own boat with him, as soon as pratique was satisfied; and Cooper cleared his papers with the port officers. From his fellow-skippers, Cooper learned that Hawkins was a trader indeed, in a small way; this rush of fortune would be the making of him. Another hour saw a flock of bumboats, peddlers and hawkers of all kinds three deep around the ship, and word arrived from Hawkins that lighters would come out after the tea cargoes in the morning.

With this, Cooper went ashore with Felicia, where he took a carriage and drove under waving palms, saw the sights, and ended up at a native hut where a man in a ragged soutane came out and talked with them. Father Francis was astonished at his windfall, as well he might be, since the missionaries were in tight control of everything here; but he was no light promiser, and Cooper made no pretense about his religion.

"I'll think it over," said he, "not being sure of my duty in the matter."

"Hm!" said Cooper. "I seem to recall something in the Scriptures about it being better to marry than to burn."

Father Francis grinned at him. "Would you try trading quotations with me?"

"Not I! Every man to his trade, Father."

They laughed together, and Felicia struck in:

"Tell me, if there's anything we could do—"

"Yes. Get me to Chile quickly. So you'd bribe me, eh?"

"If we could," she rejoined. "We can do that, can't we, Ezra?"

He nodded. "Cargo out, cargo in—then straight there."

Father Francis stared at them. "Glory be! I'll come aboard and talk tomorrow. At the moment I've a hurt man in the hut here."

So they accepted dismissal, and drove on; but the ice was broken.

HAWKINS came aboard the next morning, full of business. Lighters were already around all four ships, unloading tea; parties on shore-leave were ashore, and many a bitter expletive was heard on discovery that no liquor was to be had, thanks to missionary rule.

A number of whalers were lying here, and Hawkins was abuzz with commissions, for all the oil desired could be obtained, and Cooper was sure of full cargoes home. This necessitated a good deal of paper-work, and Cooper had not a free moment until noon. The last thing Hawkins said, too, lingered with him.

"There's never been a ship here, Cap'n, with any amount of gold aboard; if the King gets word of it he may take a notion to seize the lot—or someone else may. So, if talking is done by your men ashore, better be ready."

With a wink and a nod, he departed.

"So, you infernal rascal, you're sniffing that gold, are you?" thought Cooper. He had already entered the cases as being personal effects of his passenger, which the consul said would cover the matter until he got home; some of the men must have done some talking about it. He knew only roughly that the gold which had been put aboard came to a value of twenty thousand dollars or more, and was in dust.

It had been put aboard at Manila to bait him into a Spanish trap, and he had very simply run away with it. He was not concerned about ethics, but did not wish to lose it. So he was biting upon this thought when Father Francis came aboard, in mid-afternoon, and he led the priest down to Felicia's cabin.

THERE, after the usual greetings, the priest sat down and questioned them—first about Chile. He had been bound thither when wrecked, and the fact that he could go there at once delighted him, though it did not affect his attitude toward the marriage.

"In a word, I can marry you, so be at ease," he said. "Your statements that the wedding was arranged in Manila are all that is necessary. Why not do it ashore, and spend the time there until you leave? It'll be no trouble to rent a house—and already you have one devoted servant."

He spoke of Felipe, who had accompanied them from Manila. The little Filipino had already greeted him when he came aboard. Since they would be tied up here for a couple of weeks with cargo changes, his suggestion was to the point. So it was arranged that on the morrow Felicia would meet him ashore and rent a house to occupy momentarily, and he departed. Felicia clapped her hands, delighted. Cooper, being a practical man, set to thinking about his gold dust. The four boxes containing it were still in the forehold of the *Hannah.* Fat, solid boxes of native hardwood, each one a load for two men.

"Time somebody was taking a look inside," reflected Cooper. "And it had better be me. No time like the present, I guess."

He called Chips, who fell to work. Even the carpenter had a tough job breaking into those hardwood boxes, which were green and heavy as lead. Built to stand rough usage, each required two men to handle it, empty or full. The contents, embedded in moss, proved surprisingly scanty, being merely little long bags of alligator skin, and not many either. They were crudely made, of irregular size.

Cooper took one of these down to the main cabin and Felicia opened it, letting a stream of yellowish grains pour over the table. There it was, gold from the pirate pagan islands,

Illustrated by Cleveland Woodward



"Hm!" said Cooper. "I seem to recall something in the Scriptures about it being better to marry than to burn."

gold from Sulu—but not pure gold by a long shot! Canton had taught Ezra Cooper that raw gold had a rough value ,of twenty dollars an ounce. He ran his fingers through the yellow grains and shook his head.

"That's why there's so mucb of it! The Moros don't value this highly; they've no means of separating the gold from sand and other stuff—probably this is just as it's dug out of riverbeds. About half of this is gold, the rest is sand or silica. Hm! About two pounds weight to the sack—well, sew it up again and take it ashore with you. It'll more than pay for the house, in case you find one. Be sure to point out that the stuff is not pure gold."

"Aren't you going?" she asked in surprise.

He shook bis head. "I must get a letter written to your father, and I've other business on hand," he evaded. "Take Felipe with you."

He had to write the letter, true; but talk with his other captains had told him what was going to happen; two of them bad been here before. They knew how capricious and fantastic was the government of this island kingdom. So he sent Felicia ashore to meet the priest, Felipe carrying her leather sack of gold-dust, and waited.

The bay was ablaze with sunlight that morning and alive with action. Lighters plied between ship and shore; the half-dozen schooners and cutters of the "royal navy" were anchored offshore, and boats darted about in every direction; half a dozen stodgy whalers were in under Diamond Head, and along the beach parties of whites and natives were surfriding and bathing. Cooper finished his letter to Don Clemente, his partner at Manila and father of Felicia, then went on deck, drinking in the warm sunlight. He was there when tbe boat with the lean man drew in to the gangway.



Morning saw the peaks of Oahu pricking the skies; noon saw them anchored beside their sister ships.

"Ahoy!" sang out the lean man. "Cap'n Cooper aboard?"

"Speaking," Cooper rejoined laconically.

"I'm James Mason, harbor-master."

"Come aboard," Cooper invited, and the other did so.

THEY made a curiously similar pair, as they shook hands: Like Cooper, Mason was lean and rangy, with rugged features. He, too, had hard lively eyes in a bony face, aggressive as though anticipating combat and prepared for it. His air was of wary, alert waiting, and he spoke with a nasal Down-Easter drawl.

"You ain't a Maine man?" he asked.

"Nope. Newburyport."

"You don't say! I'm from Marblehead myself. I have a trifle of business to get cleared up with you, Cap'n, seeing as you're lightering quite a bit of cargo ashore."

"Aye. Step below, if you will. May I offer you a drink?"

"The laws are severe, Cap'n, against taking liquor ashore or offering it to the natives. At the present time, being a subject of the King, it's taboo for me."

In the main cabin, Mason stared around curiously but asked no questions. He accepted a cigar, produced his heavily sealed document of authority, and Cooper, getting out his papers for all four ships, settled up port charges and duties upon his tea. All this was routine, including a fat bit of cumshaw for Mr. Mason.

"It's rumored," said the latter, when all was finished, "that you've quite a bit of raw gold aboard. Is that rumor correct?"

"It is," said Cooper. "But it's the property of a passenger, and is bound with the ship to the United States. You have no concern with it."

"Then the gold doesn't come ashore?" asked Mason, eyes keen and predatory.

"It does not."

"In such case, Cap'n, all's correct. If it does go ashore, it must be duly cleared with me. We have an odd sort of rule here, sir—a thin veneer of civilized custom imposed upon barbaric savagery."

"Like the Mother Hubbards you make the women wear."

"Precisely. The King delegates much of his authority to those around him, in matters concerning outsiders. Naturally, small amounts of gold do not matter, but an import of any size must be arranged for in due form."

Mason spoke with a steely inflexibility; he was not a person to inspire any sympathy or confidence. Cooper thought of the leather sack Felicia had taken ashore, but dismissed the thought. That was a small amount

and therefore did not matter, as Mason had just said.

A few words more and the visitor departed. Cooper saw him off without regret, and grunted assent when Mr. Potts voiced unfavorable comment on the man.

"A bad customer, if I'm any judge. Last time I was here there was none of this harbor-master nonsense. Take anything ashore and welcome."

"Itchy fingers, Mr. Potts. Ordinarily there's no pretense at any customs service here, but they've found it means money in hand."

Felicia came back in a couple of hours, radiant. Her leather sack was gone, but she threw a shower of gold and silver coins on the cabin table, excitedly.

"Everything's arranged, and it's to be at noon tomorrow!"

"What is?" asked Cooper.

"The wedding, silly—or didn't you know there was going to be a marriage?"

"Oh! Then you got a house?"

"A perfect darling. It belongs to one of the chiefs, and we're to have it for two weeks, or longer if we stay over; the furniture is mostly mats, but who cares! We meet Father Francis there at noon, have the ceremony; then the place belongs to us. Servants, too. We saw the chief, and he was a gentleman. He refused money at first but I made him take some. He said the gold was far too much and gave me a lot of money back, all kinds. He had never seen gold dust before and was curious about it. He's a cousin of the King, or a relative of some kind. It seems that the King is not on very good terms with the missionaries. . ."

She was full of news about the inhabitants of the islands, but Cooper paid small heed. He had suddenly realized that he lacked the most essential thing for the ceremony—a ring. This flung him into panic. He took up some of the money from the table and hastened on deck, which was in charge of the mate.

"Mr. Potts!" he exclaimed. "Something you'll have to do for me—a ring! I need one for tomorrow. You're going ashore with us to be a witness. Well, here's money; find me a wedding-ring, here on the ship or at someplace ashore. Never mind about the fit. You have one ready at noon tomorrow."

With a grin, Mr. Potts took the money and promised compliance. Mr. Potts and two of the men were to attend the ceremony, Mr. Brewster staying with the ship. With this off his mind, Cooper returned to Felicia and was swamped with a thousand and one things to do at once, from dishes to eat out of to clothes to wear.

"And a sack of that gold-dust," she said, "as a fee for the priest. If it's mine, as you say it is, I think we can well afford it."

Cooper shrugged and promised to have one of the sacks ready. Felicia said she had invited the chief who owned the house, to the wedding. He had refused, because it would offend the missionaries—religious feeling was running high in the Islands at the time—and Father Francis had said frankly they need expect sentiment to be against them. Only active intervention by the British Consul had saved from expulsion an Irish priest, last year. Such feeling was more extensive among the whites than among the natives, however.

GOING ashore, even for two weeks or so, necessitated much packing. This took up the evening, and with morning a boat was sent ashore with the carpet-bags and parcels, in charge of Felipe, who would remain at the house. Well ahead of time, Felicia and Cooper, freshly shaved and wearing his brass-buttoned broadcloth, with Mr. Potts seconding him, were put ashore. Carriages were awaiting them, and they drove for a mile or so to a pleasant thatched house, secluded in a grove of palms, on higher ground overlooking the wide bay.

They alighted and were shown over the house by Felicia and Father Francis. A large front room was set aside for the wedding itself, and here heaps of flowers were awaiting the attentions of Felicia; a little group of smiling brown servants stood in the next room, and these had prepared leis, or flower-wreaths, for everyone. Cooper remained looking around longer than the others; when he looked for Mr. Potts and the two seamen, he found them wandering among the trees outside, at some distance from the house.

Glad to leave the arrangements in Felicia's hands, Cooper bit at a cigar and started for them, when his attention was caught by an odd figure approaching. Obviously a native, of great height and size, this stranger wore a bright red coat with epaulets and carried a large gold-headed cane. He had amiable features and greeted Cooper with a nod.

"Good morning," he said in very good English, though with a heavy accent. "Is this the house where people are being married?"

"It will be soon," rejoined Cooper. "I expect to be the victim in a few more minutes."

"Indeed!" said the other, giving him a curious look. "Have I met you?"

"I think not. Ezra Cooper is the name. Master of the *Hannah*, yonder."

The other smiled and held out his hand, giving some native name, whose liquid accents sounded to Cooper like "Mea." Gravely Cooper shook hands.

"Are you one of the Island chiefs, Mea?" he asked.

The other smiled.

"You might call me so," he said. "I heard of this affair and am curious; I never saw a wedding, except in church. Would it be permitted to witness it?"

Cooper assured him that he would be welcome as a guest. At this moment he saw Mr. Potts approaching.

"Mr. Potts, shake hands with Chief Mea—I think that's the name," he said. "And did you get the ring?"

Potts, in the act of shaking hands, stiffened.

"My Lord, sir—God forgive me, I forgot about it!" he exclaimed. "Couldn't raise one on the ship, and I meant to get one ashore this morning, and that was the end of it. Are there any shops nearby?"

"Obviously, not," Cooper rejoined in dismay. The red-coated native looked from one to the other, puzzled.

"Is something wrong?" he inquired.

"The ring!" ejaculated Mr. Potts. "They need a gold ring for the wedding, and I didn't get it."

"Oh, the ring, of course!" Chief Mea lifted his hand, to display a number of rings. "Perhaps I may assist you, gentlemen; would any of these be right?"

COOPER'S quick glance fell on a small ring of plain gold.

"The very thing!" he said, indicating it. "If I may buy it from you—"

"No, no—the gift will rejoice me, my friend," said the native, but Cooper insisted on making a return for it.

"Money of any kind—even gold dust, if you prefer," he said.

The native pricked up his ears.

"Gold dust? What is that?"

"Might interest you as a curiosity," Cooper rejoined, and turned to Potts. "Get some from that bag I brought ashore, will you? A couple of spoonfuls, then close the bag again."

Mr. Potts started hastily for the house, anxious to repair his neglect. Cooper took the plain ring extended by Chief Mea, and explained the nature of gold dust. The other listened attentively; he understood English far better than he spoke it.

"Good!" he said at length. "This is an exchange of gifts, then—your dust for my ring! That is much better. I should like a quantity of this dust, to have things made from it. Have you more?"

"Plenty; but I can't supply you," Cooper replied, and told of Mason's visit to his ship. "He's a friend of the King—probably you know him—and it's against the law to sell the stuff here ashore."

"The King has many friends whom I do not know," rejoined the other.



For a moment he took Felicia in his arms. Then all were around him, hearty voices ringing in congratulations.

"They make laws to suit themselves. The old days were better. We have two newspapers here now, and the missionaries are very proud of it; everybody reads and writes English, but it was more pleasant when we were savages."

Mr. Potts came back, walking fast, and handed over a twist of paper containing the gold dust.

"All ready and waiting, sir," he said, beckoning his two seamen.

Chief Mea carefully tucked away his gold, and followed the others to the house. Inside, Cooper joined Felicia, and they stood before the priest. The ceremony was quite informal. None of the servants was present. Chief Mea looked on with intent manner, deeply interested, and knelt when the others did. Father Francis seemed slightly startled by his appearance, but made no comment and read the marriage service without haste.

To Cooper, it was like a dream. Married—it was unreal! Yet the face of the girl beside him, the quick little glances she flung at him, wakened him to reality. He, Ezra Cooper, was no longer the same man. Love and trust—yes, there were two of them now, and one more precious than himself; another self to whom his life was now given, and all his thought. Henceforth life was a different thing, a greater thing. He must plan and act for them both, and chiefly for her; he wondered if his voice were as firm and brave as her voice. Thus ran the tumult of his mind, until at length the book of the priest was closed with a blessing; it was done.

For a moment he took Felicia in his arms. Then all were around him, Mr. Potts gripping his hand, hearty voices ringing at him in congratulations. Chief Mea stood before Felicia, with a grotesque little bow, and Cooper presented him. Then one of the seamen got his attention.

"Beg pardon, sir—there's somebody outside, with some men."

Cooper went to the door and flung it open. To his surprise he saw Mason, with half a dozen natives—soldiery of a sort, armed with muskets, one with a sword. Mason spoke with curt words.

"Cap'n Cooper? I'm sorry to come at such a moment, sir; but I've placed men aboard your ships, and I must place you under arrest."

"Are you mad?" ejaculated Cooper.

"Not at all, sir. I warned you against bringing gold ashore; you, or your former passenger, brought it. She is now your wife, thus your pretense that the gold is her property is quite void, and the responsibility is yours. I have ordered any gold dust found aboard your vessels seized; it is confiscated, and any resistance from you shall be punished—"

Cooper lost his head. A trap—at such a time! He looked out to the water, and saw boats crowding about his ships, chiefly about the *Hannah;* then his eyes flitted back to meet those of Mason, with such a blaze of

fire in them that Mason started back hastily, lifting an arm. Too late! His arm was brushed aside. Cooper's fist cracked into his mouth and drove him backward, struck him again as he fell.

Aware of a cry from Felicia, of a quavering chorus from the soldiers, Cooper stepped back and let Mason come to his feet, hand fumbling at his bleeding lips. He had been a fool, and realized it. Now Mason and his soldiers could do their worst—but he blinked as he looked at them. The soldiers were lined up at attention. Mason was not even regarding him, but was staring past him in dismay, and was speaking hoarsely.

"Your Majesty, I—I didn't know—"

Cooper turned and saw Chief Mea standing in the doorway. Majesty?

"No, Mr. Mason, there is much you do not know," he replied, anger in his tone. "And your license from me does not run as far as you think. I am making the laws here, not you. If there is any gold to be confiscated, I am the one to do it—not you. When you wear the yellow-feather robe of royalty, you may employ my soldiers, and not until then."

Cooper stared in amazement, slowly realizing the truth. This must be no other than King Kamehamea himself—and he had not caught the name at all! Liquid native words came from the King. The officer with a sword turned and legged it to the road and away; the soldiers lifted their muskets and surrounded Mason, who stood appalled.

"You white men are too fond of making laws for me," went on the King in English. "Now I intend to make a few for myself. I appointed you customs inspector or something, and what I gave can also be taken away. You are now nothing. There is no law against trading in gold dust; and, Captain Cooper, I shall very gladly purchase whatever amount you wish to sell me."

"As much as you'd like, King," Cooper rejoined. "I'm sorry that I did not get your name aright—"

Kamehamea waved his hand. "It is nothing. What's that?" He listened as Mason spoke in Kanaka, then nodded. "Yes, you say truly. Mr. Cooper, you committed a crime in striking one of my subjects. However, I had given orders that only the servants of the house were to intrude on the privacy of this place, today. Mr. Mason has disobeyed, and therefore the fault is balanced. My soldiers shall leave your ships at once, and Mr. Mason shall go to jail—eh?"

"He's punished enough," spoke out Cooper. "Let me appeal for him, Your Majesty. Just after being married, I want to see no one harmed—"

"Yes, my friend," put in the other dryly, "I observed the great mercy in your blows! Well, have it as you like. He shall go free, on one condition. This is that you and your wife dine with me this evening. We shall feast on the shore, after the custom of my people—and perhaps talk a little about gold dust, eh? Good. I shall send a carriage for you at sunset."

FLOURISHING his gold-headed cane, King Kamehamea strode off, greatly pleased with himself. Cooper hastened inside the house. He found Felicia just presenting Father Francis with the sack of gold, while Mr. Potts and his seamen signed the marriage papers at one side. Cooper told of the royal invitation.

"You get back aboard ship, Mr. Potts, and don't let anyone make a fuss," he ordered. "If the gold is taken ashore, let it go. I'll see the King about it tonight."

He saw them off, shook hands with the priest—and then sighted Shorty Hawkins bearing up for the house, a parcel under his arm.

"Hello! You've missed the boat," said Cooper. "Or weren't you in on that little game of Mason's?"

"If I was, sir, that was me own mistake," said Hawkins cheerfully. "May I make bold to make a bit of a wedding present? It ain't much—just one o' them fancy big shells folks prize a lot. They ain't easy come by these days."

"That's very kind indeed, Mr. Hawkins," exclaimed Felicia, beaming. "And we'll value it a lot, I'm sure. Thank you so much!"

Hawkins tipped his hat and sidled away. Cooper regarded his wife, astonished.

"Hello! That rascal has got around you, has he?"

"I didn't call him a rascal at all," retorted Felicia. "He thinks I'm a fine lady—he said so himself. Not that he's a friend to boast of; he's just ashamed."

Cooper closed the door. "Well, you're welcome to your seashell, and you can talk to the King tonight about your gold. He wants it all. And you'd better send away those servants."

She laughed. "You're thinking too far ahead! We can't send them away; they have a meal all ready to serve. It's past noon, you know. Ezra, why didn't you tell me he was the King?"

"Didn't know it myself. These Island names all sound alike, really." He looked up. "Past noon? So it is, and I have a thousand things to do—and shall do none of them." His lean features relaxed, and laughter-wrinkles softened his eyes. "This day belongs to you—no, every day belongs to you, but most of them carry work to be done. Come over here."

He drew her to the table, where sat the square little gold-fired cup he had given her—the sacrificial cup, gift of an emperor, which had so ruled his first voyage to the China seas with wondrous luck. He quoted softly from the verse graven on its four golden sides:

"With such radiance about your head
It is fitting that you bear this sacred cup
Used annually by imperial hands in the heaven-worship!

"That expresses it, my dear—the radiance about you!" he went on gently. "It might have been written for you, in those very words. You make all the world sing, since you are yourself a song, a shaft of brightness; happiness is in your very name, Felicia. And I trust it'll always be like that, with no word or deed of mine ever to diminish your singing brightness!"

As she clung to him, the blossoms of her lei were pressed up about her face like a sea of sweetness.

"It never can or could!" she breathed. "From now on we're one. I know you and your firm heart, and I know the worth of it. God bless us both, my dear."

"Amen," said Ezra Cooper, and kissed her.

Too Smart for

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

IN the Cafe Almirante, a dubious establishment on one of Havana's narrower streets, Captain Eustace Pring of the *Carib Trade* sat at a marble-topped table in his usual contemptuous aloofness. Ignoring the few customers, he nursed a glass of *pina* and kept small greenish eyes, no harder than bits of a broken beer bottle, on the entrance.

Ignacio Garcia, the shipping agent, was late. In the case of this active but unscrupulous gentleman, absence might mean arrest. Captain Pring felt no personal danger; he had yet to clinch the deal with Garcia. But unless that deal went through, Captain Pring was up against pulling an insurance job; and underwriters were a cold, suspicious lot.

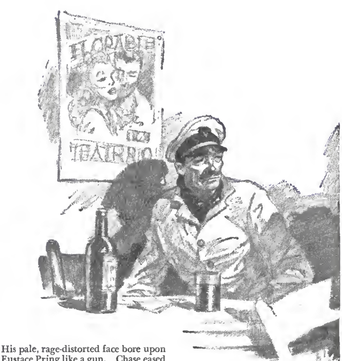
Garcia arrived. Abruptly Captain Pring's straight back went rigid, and his lips thinned.

Garcia was not alone. Young Dave Chase, that brawny, awkwardly jointed third mate of Pring's, was with him, with a massive arm flung in friendly fashion over Garcia's shoulders. Dave Chase looked pleased with himself. The comradely arm ended in long, taut fingers that gripped Garcia's biceps in a concealed but powerful hold. Both men were dripping, soaked to the skin. A single whiff told Captain Pring that what they were wet with was Havana harbor water, which the Hydrographic Office's Sailing Directions warns mariners is unsuitable even for the washing of decks.

Dave Chase's khaki shirt and trousers seemed to have suffered less than Ignacio Garcia's white linen suit. And Dave's manner was undisturbed, though Garcia was in an ill-suppressed rage that came close to converting the harbor water on him into steam.

"Hi, Cap'n!" said Dave Chase. His informality, though marked, was not consciously disrespectful, and not even the Navy had been able to cure him of it during his war hitch as a gunner. "Cap'n, look what I got! This bird said he wanted to see you, so I brought him along."

Ignacio Garcia stood still, dripping softly into his tan-and-white shoes.



His pale, rage-distorted face bore upon Eustace Pring like a gun. Chase eased him into a chair next to Pring and stood close.

"This guy had the nerve to come aboard and hint that you were a dirty, alien smuggling crook, Cap'n," the young third mate reported, lowering his voice as curious ears at a few other tables came to the point. "I caught him in the after hold, and he said he'd come aboard before meeting you, to check if there'd be room enough to smuggle ten foreigners, not six, to Miami in there alongside the shaft tunnel under a cargo of bananas."

Dave Chase shook his head indignantly at Ignacio Garcia.

"O' course I threw him overboard, Cap'n. Believe it or not, the guy couldn't swim. So I have to go overboard into that perfume myself and tow him to his shore boat. He kept sputtering what would happen to me when he got to you, so I said okay, let's go see the Cap'n now and you can repeat that smuggling chatter to his face."

He stirred up Ignacio with a big finger. "Go on, let's hear you call Cap'n Pring a crook to his face, you!"

GARCIA's black eyes were burning into Captain Pring like an electric welding job. His voice was faint and shaking, but most precise:

"You are unfortunate in your choice of officers, Captain. And believe me, you will be unfortunate, too, in meeting your present difficulty. Good day, Captain!"

He stood up abruptly, bowed curtly and walked out. Only an uncontrol-

THE SMALL SLY PLANS OF SCHEMING MEN GANG AFT AGLEY AT SEA.

the Sea



lable twitch of the eyes toward massive Dave Chase marred the dignity of his departure.

"The little rooster!" Dave said, almost in admiration. "I thought he'd crawl to you, Captain. Want me to grab him?"

"Let him go," Captain Pring said succinctly through his teeth. "Get back to the ship."

"I could do with a beer, for sanitary reasons, first," Dave Chase said, crinkling his nose experimentally. "Sort o' fragrant, ain't I?"

His eyes dropped with mild perplexity to the Captain's *pina,* a concoction of pineapple crushed with ice and sugar. "Any kick to that?"

"Have your beer outside—in the sun," Captain Pring commanded, controlling his temper rigidly, for this brainless oaf was useful to him; he would not let anger rob him of a tool till it was no longer needed.

"Be seeing you," said Dave Chase cheerfully. He patted the waiter on the shoulder, indicated the size of the desired drink, and strode out to a sidewalk table.

THE deal with Ignacio Garcia was through, then. Perhaps a fortunate development, since Garcia had such a loose tongue as to confide in a fool like Chase. But Eustace Pring was left in a very tight place.

Pring could never understand why a man as competent as he was should now, in middle age, be merely the master and owner of the *Carib Trade,* an old tramp steamship that roamed the West Indies, and on occasion, ate the food out of Pring's mouth because his luck was bad.

Pring suspected that his corrosive contempt for the rest of the human race leaked through and men, good and bad, felt uneasy in his company and gave him a wide berth. Only a naïve, cheery young man like Dave Chase could suffer him undisturbed —or even champion his good name.

For a moment, with cynical understanding, Eustace Pring considered Dave Chase. This fellow Chase was what other people only talked about being—he was free. Chase said what he thought, and did what he thought right, regardless of consequences. Often the consequences were heavy,

but the moron was almost completely happy. Odd, that!

Eustace Pring made a note to correct Chase's enviable state of mind.

But right now—Pring took a sip of his *pina* preparatory to a business session with himself, a lone wolf in a world of packs and mobs and armies. His eyes wandered across the almost empty café and focused with sardonic amusement on the person of Captain John Arkwright, plump, flushed master of the medium-sized Hearn cargo liner *Theodore Hearn*.

Arkwright, the weak-minded swab, was half-seas over, and playing stud poker in dark, brooding, slow-witted concentration with a couple of shore friends. To Captain Pring's knowing eyes, these latter were plainly sharpers, and they were stripping Arkwright easily. Yet Captain John Arkwright stood like a sea god on the flying bridge of a five-thousand-ton ship! Of course, Arkwright did all his drinking ashore, but he deserved no such command.



EUSTACE PRING'S thin lips twisted. He watched the fleecing of his brother shipmaster witb idle satisfaction. He postponed the plotting of his proposed brush with the underwriters to consider why he too should not get a bit out of this gullible drunk.

One of the local sharks exposed his hole card, grinned briefly at the shipmaster and reached out a skinny arm for the pot. But Arkwright brought his fist smashing down suddenly on the man's other hand, lying flat on the table. He shoved aside the paralyzed fingers. A card was revealed. A handy thing, two hole cards!

Roaring, Arkwright jumped to his feet. The marble-topped table crashed to the floor. Men scuttled away. Both the sharks clawed at Arkwright, who was blocking their escape to the street.

Arkwright snatched up a chair. With alcoholic violence he sailed into them, driving them back. The lady at the desk ran screaming to the sidewalk. The waiter ran with her. Their diminishing voices wailed a duet of alarm.

A moment later a long-legged representative of the Havana police came charging into the room. Arkwright was mowing down his two pals; the big Cuban cop went for him without the slightest hesitation. Arkwright's attention was diverted; his two opponents spun around, located the back way and bolted.

Arkwright was sobering up. He fended off the cop with his chair; shoved it suddenly under his feet and turned to run. The cop shouted, caroming off a table and floundering over the chair.

Pring watched all this without stirring from his table. But suddenly his small greenish eyes sharpened; he got to his feet with a small man's speed and sureness. His gaze flicked around the café. Empty!

As the cop got up off the floor, Pring plucked a bottle from the next table, stepped behind him and cracked the young policeman on the back of the head. The man flattened out on the floor with the fragments of the bottle tinkling around him.

Pring backed away from him quickly and turned toward the street. A man came bolting into the café. It was Dave Chase, and by the way he panted, he must have started back to the café from some distance down the street. Quickly the sympathetic dolt dropped to his knees beside the stunned policeman.

"Somebody hit that poor fellow," Captain Pring drawled. "Look after him, Mister. I don't wish to be involved in this drunken brawl."

"How could ye be—on pineapple?" Dave Chase said.

"As you say," Eustace Pring said. He hurried out as Dave Chase went to work on the young cop.

With easy familiarity Captain Pring cut through narrow streets direct to the *muelle* alongside which the *Theodore Hearn* was discharging cargo. Though his legs were short, he made speed, and polite Cubans suffered from his elbows. On the wharf he waited.

Captain Arkwright hove into sight, walking with ponderous dignity. His eyes jerked around apprehensively. His dark flushed face flattened out in forced blankness when he saw Eustace Pring intercepting him.

Pring sauntered up and looked him over. His cold, knowing eyes stripped away that fat captain's dignity.

"It's all right, Arkwright, I think," Pring said at last in a low voice. "I covered up for you."

Captain Arkwright grunted unintelligibly.

Pring shook his head in grave uncertainty. He drawled: "But it looked as if you fractured that cop's skull with the chair."

Arkwright's meat-red face paled.

"What? Why, I—I just fended him off," he stammered. "How could it be fractured?"

Pring shrugged, and waited to let his lie sink in.

"Nobody knew who you were," he said. "Unfortunately my third mate, one of those conscientious fellows, had a good look at you legging it away."

"I—I can't understand it, Pring," Arkwright muttered. "The poor guy! Fractured! I must ha' been higher than I—"

Pring cut him off without haste. "I'll try to keep my third off your neck, but don't show yourself ashore. Sailing tomorrow, aren't you? That's good."

"I'm not squeezing you," Pring said disdainfully. "The pettiness of the idea is revolting."



He raised a hand, looked hard into Arkwright's stricken face and walked briskly away. A small smile slipped across his face and vanished. Captain Arkwright was on his hook.

THREE days later Captain Pring lined up the structures of the San Juan harbor range lights, made the sharp turn around black light buoy Number 3 and brought the *Carib Trade* into the narrow harbor of Puerto Rico's capital.

His binoculars showed him the respectable bulk and the buff superstructure of Captain Arkwright's *Theodore Hearn* alongside a pier. With a nod of his head he turned away, saw to the anchoring of his empty ship and descended to eat an unhurried dinner in the musty saloon.

That afternoon Dave Chase was painting out his room in the after end of the old ship's bridgehouse. He had no cargo to occupy his time. After every dozen strokes of his four-inch brush, he would step back, humming discordantly, to regard the cream bulkhead with beaming satisfaction.

In the doorway Captain Eustace Pring paused with sardonic little light green eyes, to watch him labor. All wasted, that painting, if this burly self-satisfied oaf only knew it!

Dave Chase became conscious of his gaze and whirled around instinctively, as men were apt to do when small Captain Pring laid those unwinking eyes of his on a man's back.

"Magnificent!" drawled Captain Pring. "If anybody should inquire, I'll be ashore visiting my old friend, the master of the *Theodore Hearn*."

"Okay!" said Dave Chase, cocking his head on one side. "D'you like the shade?"

"Sir!" Captain Pring said explosively.

Dave Chase looked down at him calmly. "Sir, then, an' no offense," he said with unwavering amiability. Solicitously he added: "What's eatin' you, Captain? That horsehide steak was hard to take. Bicarbonate of soda—"

Narrow-mouthed, Eustace Pring strode out into the hard-hitting afternoon sunlight on deck. Living among fools was trying to a man's temper. He was conscious of his crew watching him. He frowned at his chief officer, who was glum about the scarcity of cargo, and descended the accommodation ladder to a shore boat.

At her pier the larger, well-found *Theodore Hearn* was unloading flour with clamorous winches.

Captain John Arkwright, fat, dark, brooding, was not happy to see him. Pring sat down deliberately, like a snake uncoiling, in the chair opposite Arkwright as the man huddled on his thick elbows at the desk.

"I understand they haven't found out yet who swung the chair in that Havana café brawl," Captain Eustace Pring said, letting his voice drawl.

Arkwright looked quickly at the closed door.

"What d'you want?" he asked sullenly.

Not sufficient humility, Pring decided. He added mendaciously:

"I heard after you sailed that the cop died. And they're fussy about their *comisionados* in Havana."

He shook his head at the ashen shipmaster. "A terrible thing, drink. Never touch it myself."

Arkwright stared at him. "It's been close to the ruin of me," he said slowly, "but by Peter, a drop once in a while might ha' made something near to a man out of you."

PRING smiled, as if a button had been pressed briefly. "Now if I can just keep my third mate from spotting you," he murmured.

"I asked you before," Captain Arkwright said hoarsely: "What d'you want?"

Pring relaxed in his chair, with his eyes half-closed but not stirring from Arkwright's agitated face.

"It's this way, Captain," he said. "I'm about to retire from the sea, but not empty-handed, and I need your coöperation."

"You can't squeeze a stone," Arkwright said. "I haven't—"

"I'm not squeezing you," Pring said disdainfully. "The pettiness of the idea is revolting. You forget I own a ship. I could buy or sell you. Listen!"

His eyes had Arkwright now as a python charms a bird; and Arkwright, never shifting his fascinated gaze, slowly licked his lips. It was not often Pring could make a brother captain hang on his words.

"Arkwright, do you ever feel yourself hemmed in, constrained, limited?" he asked. "Two or three hundred years ago in these waters shipmasters were truly masters. They made their own laws; they were obeyed without scruple."

Arkwright stared uncomprehendingly.

"Now we so-called masters are denied ruthless, self-satisfying action by the censorship of the honest, timid dolts who make up our crews. Masters? We're puppets! Our underlings hold the strings."

Arkwright frowned. Did he remember the pirate captains, true masters of their fate, who once swept the Caribbean? He did not speak.

"My third mate, Dave Chase, who is your Nemesis too, exemplifies that irritating control over me, who should



With a rumble like thunder, the ship slashed into Pring's after deck, scant feet forward of the taffrail.

be above control on my own bridge," Eustace Pring said. "He's a cheerful, matter-of-fact lout who's always ready enough to bear a hand, though never ready to accord me the respect that is my due. A carefree, happy fellow who'd do right though hell burnt him, a man who's come somehow to exert the power of a conscience, riding me, governing—"

With a laugh at Arkwright's uneasy face, he broke off.

"I'll pass that, Captain," he said. "A bit over your bead, a thousand fathoms over, perhaps."

"Well?" Arkwright pressed sullenly.

"As I said, I'm swallowing the anchor. I always loathed the stupid, blustering sea and the stupid, blustering men who follow the sea." He leaned forward confidentially. "Look, Arkwright, my old ship will never pass her next examination. No; there'd be no insurance for the *Carib Trade* or ber cargoes if the underwriters knew ber present condition."

Arkwright was sitting very still, with sweat welling on his forehead.

"You see my problem," Captain Pring said. "I want to realize on my

investment. But I have an honest, sanctimonious sort of crew. And underwriters are a prying lot, who've quit paying up on stale frauds."

"You want to pile her up or sink her," Arkwright muttered. "Well, why tell me? Go to hell your own road."

Pring nodded. "With your assistance, Captain," he amended. "I want you to give her a touch of your bow."

"Run her down? Why, you dirty little—"

Arkwright jumped to his feet, raging as he had raged in the café. But wherever he stormed in his narrow office, whatever he said in choked, half-strangled protest, Eustace Pring's hard eyes never left his. The thing to do was wait, Pring knew, and he let the fool wear himself out.

"I know how you feel, Captain," Pring said at last. "But you see the underwriters can't get too fantastic in their charges in a court of law and make them stick. Just a little realistic bit of your stem to make it plausible, and I'll have her piled up before my crew or my underwriters know where they're at. Realistic! Convincing! They'll pay."

"You think I'd risk my ticket—"

"I've planned this little mishap to protect you; they can have my ticket if they must, and welcome. But they'll not get yours, unless, of course, for murder of the cop."

"And suppose I kill men in—"

"You should have thought of that before you swung that chair," Pring said. He lifted a small hand in a gesture. "Relax, Captain. I am a competent shipmaster. I do not intend to lose any men. It could cost me money. And I'll want all I get, beyond a bit to you to soothe—"

"I'll not take a nickel of it!" Arkwright snarled.

"Generous, almost quixotic," Pring said approvingly. "I'll not press it on you."

PRING sat back, clasped his hands behind his neck and looked at the overhead.

"Turn your mind to the northeast corner of this island, my dear Arkwright, to San Juan passage, where you head between Las Cucarachas and Cape San Juan light, and find yourself with some of the most rugged reefs and ledges close aboard—"

"You come openly to my ship in broad daylight to plan this?"

"Certainly," said Captain Pring. "I'll see to it that half the shipping men in this island know I've visited you. These things are plotted under a log in the dark of the moon. Now listen!"

He caught the look of rebellion on Arkwright's face and added kindly:

"You can always let me down at the last moment, Captain, though I confess I'd not like to be in your shoes—or cell-block—if you do."

He shook his head regretfully now. "How I hate threats! Your ship will leave port on regular schedule, bound for La Guaira, and I will accommodate myself to your movements, since I am merely a tramp in ballast looking for a cargo among—"

Precisely he outlined his plan, with no mention of certain last-second touches which would convince the underwriters that this was no fraud, and which would, incidentally, cost Arkwright his job and ticket.

And Arkwright, still held by Pring's hard green eyes, slumped at his desk, listening now without protest, though his brow was very black.

CAPTAIN EUSTACE PRING clamped his scrawny hands behind his back and stepped precisely up to his spare, gray-headed chief mate, who had the watch.

"Go down and take over that job, Mr. Nordholm," he said. "And send up Dave Chase. Maybe he can walk a bridge if he can't replace a cargo runner without fouling up the whole well-deck."

Mild old Nordholm looked surprised. To him, Dave Chase had seemed to be handling the gang on deck all right. But Eustace Pring wanted a green officer on the bridge. Nordholm didn't know that.

"Aye, sir," Nordholm said, and went bent-legged down the ladder.

Captain Pring strode over to the leeward wing of the bridge. The lookout, a sallow Cuban, posted by his order, moved uneasily on his feet. Pring had been riding the man, preying on his nerves.

Cape San Juan, the northeasterly point of Puerto Rico, rose up off on the starboard quarter. On the port hand, to windward, stretched the long line of the Cordilleras Reefs. They broke white-capped seas rolled up by the northeasterly tradewind, but nevertheless the water in this narrow passage was fretful, churning, leaping, curling into sudden whiteness, vexed not only by wind but by currents and uneven bottom. The sun, off in the western sky, threw startling rays across the restless water.

Captain Pring smiled thinly behind his hand. A twitchy lookout would see thrusting ledges under every spurt of white foam.

Though it was a nasty, dangerous-looking passage, a lifeboat would make nothing of that choppy water.

"Keep your eyes peeled!" Pring snapped in the Cuban seaman's ear.

"*Si* . . . aye, sir!" the man jerked out unhappily.

In turning to walk away, Captain Pring looked aft. Half a mile astern rode the black hull and buff superstructure of the *Theodore Hearn.* She was overhauling the *Carib Trade* rapidly, but Captain Arkwright could not overtake until they reached the trickiest stretch. Pring's calculations had been precise.

Dave Chase came up the ladder, wiping his greasy hands with a bit of cotton waste. He eyed Captain Pring with frank speculation.

"I must be a lousier rigger than I figured, huh?" he said. "What—"

"Stand by," Pring commanded curtly. "I have her."

Chase flicked a finger. "That guy astern acts like he intends to overtake," he reported.

"I've seen him." Pring put his shoulder to Dave Chase. More loudly he added: "That lookout's blind."

The Cuban winced.

The brawny third mate sighed, planted outspread arms on the bridge rail, and split his weight between his arms and one leg. He stared placidly ahead at the streaked green water.

The lookout fidgeted, dark eyes wide and straining in his olive face.

Pacing, Captain Pring kept minute track of the Hearn liner's position. She was coming up dead astern, keeping, like the tramp, to the middle of the fairway. The fat body of her master showed on her bridge. Pring thinned his lips and narrowed his eyelids. It looked as if Arkwright was obeying orders. This had to be handled smoothly. Pring had no intention of retiring from the sea to enter a Federal penitentiary.

THE ship astern crept up into the tramper's wake.

The *Hearn's* whistle blew twice.

"Answer . . . two blasts," Pring said to Dave Chase, and Chase pulled the whistle lanyard twice.

Pring flattened out a sudden scowl. The *Hearn's* bow was swinging to port. At this last minute Arkwright was giving him a wide berth—too wide a berth. The fat swab had lost his nerve. Well, Captain Pring had prepared for that.

"Check the course, Mister," he said softly to Dave Chase, and the third stepped into the wheelhouse. Pring waited an instant longer, calculating speeds and distances with the precision of a master pilot. Dave Chase was turning from the compass, ready now to return.

Pring directed a sudden, furious glare at the Cuban lookout.

Though the seaman was staring ahead, he felt the pressure of Pring's gaze, and his eyes leaped toward the shipmaster.

Pring had stopped in his stride and was staring, transfixed, at a swirl of white water, a mere vagary of the tide. It was dead ahead of the ship.

Convulsively the lookout's hand thrust out to point.

"Breakers ahead!" he screeched in panic. "Breakers ahead!"

"Hard left rudder!" Pring snapped to the helmsman. "Get it over, man! Hard over!"

To Dave Chase, poised in the wheelhouse door, he snarled: "That ship's crowding us onto the rocks!"

The helmsman fairly climbed the big wheel, spoking it over in frantic haste.

"Room enough, seems to me!" Dave said to Pring's back.

The *Carib Trade* began to swing, to swing from that non-existent reef to cross the reaching bow of the *Hearn.*

Arkwright had sullenly agreed only to sideswipe her, to give her a scrape and a shove for the benefit of the suspicious underwriters. If Eustace Pring wanted then to head her for the rocks, that was his job.

"Right rudder!" Pring sang out to the excited man at the wheel as he got her across the *Hearn.* He was playing for a real cut into his ship's vitals and no argument about it, no shadow of a Federal pen over him.

In the law of the sea, the overtaken ship had right of way; Captain Arkwright would have to talk hard and fast to save his ticket.

PRING watched his ship sliding square across in front of the Hearn liner, and jumped to the engine-room telegraph to show a spurt of activity. He rang down the engine violently, with much drama, and lifted a clenched fist at Arkwright's bridge.

"Why doesn't that crazy fool swing his ship?" he roared, so even the gang on the well-deck could hear. His voice was flustered, but his eyes were cold with calculation. This was it. But—

He whirled toward the wheelhouse. The *Carib Trade* was still swinging. Why? He saw, with leaping consternation.

Dave Chase had the wheel, and the panicky helmsman was picking himself up in the corner into which Dave's arm had brushed him. The wheel was not amidships, directing the ship squarely across the *Hearn's* bows. Dave was whirling it with mighty arms hard over to port.

Pring growled, deep in his throat, eyes slashing at the third. Dave's calculation was keen enough; he planned to keep the ship swinging to port; to shove her stern past ahead of the *Hearn's* thrusting stem, which was already turning to starboard. The *Hearn's* propeller, going astern, was thrashing white water forward along her side.

The correct maneuver in that mess, true, but it was utter disobedience of Pring's spoken command. Even in the midst of his cold effort for destruction, Pring felt a flash of rage at this junior who dared go against his shipmaster's order. Really sticking his neck out, was Mr. Chase.

Pring jammed over the telegraph handle in his hand to full astern. The deck shuddered under him as the propeller churned astern. With Chase running wild, a little confusion would be explainable.

Dave Chase had almost got her past. Her course, a sharp curve, would swing her fantail clear of the larger ship's bow and leave the *Hearn* to port, with no more than a sideswipe. But the reversed engine checked her way.

Inexorably the bow of the *Theodore Hearn,* high, knifelike, menacing, rose up. It came jamming toward the side of the *Carib Trade.* With a rumble like thunder in the clouds, the ship slashed into Pring's after deck, scant feet forward of the taffrail.

The plates of the *Carib Trade,* thinned by years of rust and ill usage, crumpled under the force of the blow. The massive stem cleft the smaller ship clear through to the rudder post. The churning propeller went dead. The rending and groaning of the steel of deck and shell plating shook the ship. Immobile men went suddenly toppling and sprawling to the deck.

The momentum of the *Hearn* was dying, but it was still great enough to send her cutting on through the buckling fantail of the old *Carib Trade* and out into the clear. The bigger ship's movement threw the tramper's bow in alongside her. The two lay grinding rivets and plates against each other, bow to stern.

Swiftly Pring reckoned she would not sink, but in spite of Chase, she was disabled. His mind went on from there.

"Get lines to her!" old Nordholm cried out, rallying his gang on the well deck. "Hold her alongside!"

IMPOSSIBLE to countermand such precautions. Too many eyes would stare his way.

Captain Pring turned his own green eyes toward Dave Chase, releasing his grip on the dead steering-wheel.

"I'll fix your little red wagon later, Mister," Pring threatened savagely through his teeth. "Get down on deck and pass lines to that ship!"

"I'm on my way, Cap'n," said Dave.

He hustled down the ladder, head back-turned. Blast his searching eyes! Dave Chase was in the hole, not Eustace Pring!

Captain Pring hailed the old mate and with curt competence issued a flood of orders. He was the calm shipmaster, fighting to save his vessel. From the engine-room the Chief reported the shaft tunnel flooded and already closed off.

"I'd say we had no propeller left to worry about," the chief added grimly. "Must ha' sheared it clean off the tailshaft and the rudder, I reckon, with it."

"Get your pumps—"

"I'm doing that," the Chief interrupted and the tube was silent.

Captain Pring walked over to the port wing of the bridge. Men of both ships were still passing lines; they had more lines secured across the bulwarks now than would hold ten ships, though the danger of her sinking with only the afterpeak and Number Four hold flooded was slight.

With sudden decision Pring swung himself over to the poop deck of the *Hearn.* He made his way across the after well and up to the bridge-house.

Captain Arkwright, a numb, silent man, was jammed in the starboard wing of his bridge, looking down at those lines and wires securing him so inexorably to the ship—and perhaps the fortunes—of Eustace Pring. The thought brought a twitch of sardonic amusement to Pring's lips. Perhaps Captain Arkwright was reviewing in his mind the rule that the overtaken ship has the right of way.

Pring focused his hard, compelling eyes on Arkwright and walked up to him. Arkwright's mate, coming up the bridge ladder, scowled at Pring with a hint of perplexity in his face and backed away.

"Just a word with you, Captain!" Pring said softly to the *Hearn's* master. "This'll be a towing job for you... and like the prudent captain I am, I'd rather be towed through the sheltered waters of Vieques Sound to St. Thomas than back in the open to San Juan. Understand?"

Faces were staring up at them from two decks, angry faces, threatening faces. Captain Arkwright nodded mutely.

Eustace Pring's stare intensified. He measured distance and speeds on a chart vivid enough in his head. "You'll tow with a Manila hawser... your hawser, Captain . . . and that hawser will part at your end as you haul me close to windward of the dangers in the approaches to St. Thomas. You understand?"

Arkwright's eyes were wide. "You—you'd still wreck her?" he stammered.

"Yes."

"God, man! Won't you collect enough money for damages without—"

"No!"

"How could I manage to part the line?"

"Your problem, Captain," Pring said with cold unconcern. His voice dropped even lower. "That towline must let go somewhere near your end, Captain... or I'll see you hang!"

He nodded, thinned his lips and turned away. He stepped past the sour chief mate of the *Hearn* without appearing to see him, and swung back aboard his own ship.

"Captain Arkwright is towing us," he said to Mr. Nordholm as the old

man came to make his report. "We'll use his line."

"Shall I rig a bridle to—"

"Don't waste time making a fancy job of it," Pring said. "We've got a smooth enough sea in the Sound here, and the Virgin Passage won't bother us."

Old Nordholm was silent. With complete lack of embarrassment, Dave Chase horned in to listen.

"You understand," Pring said sharply. "Get moving. I want to get her into shelter at the earliest possible moment."

"Aye, sir," said Nordholm, and hurried away. Pring found Dave Chase still facing him.

"Too bad you went astern just then, Cap'n," the young third said.

"Don't let that or similar nautical problems trouble you now," Pring said. His lips twitched. "I'll see to it that the board jerks that ticket of yours so fast your future problems will be methods of panhandling on the beach."

He brushed past the silent young man and returned to the bridge. Studiously he went on with the job of keeping his ship afloat... for the moment... to shut the mouths of all those honest lunkheads around him. For the moment.

HOUR after hour through the black, moonless night the *Theodore Hearn* had towed the *Carib Trade*. The northeast trade had dropped to nothing before sunset, and then, surprisingly, had risen again, reinforced by some unimportant disturbance of the usual rhythm of tropic weather.

The *Carib Trade*, first dragged through the blackness like a dead ship, roused to fight the Manila hawser as the breeze tuned up. The tow had proceeded through Vieques Sound and under the lee of Culebra Island, then, in rougher water, across the Virgin Passage.

The mountain ridge of St. Thomas, darker than the sea, was rising up ahead, beyond the lights of the *Hearn*. It was impossible to make out the towline or the man on the forecastle head watching the line.

The cheap, tinny-sounding clock in the *Carib Trade's* wheelhouse knocked off eight bells. Midnight.

Mr. Arnold, the middle-aged, colorless second mate, had been on the bridge for five minutes. Now he shuffled his feet uncertainly and turned the white blur of his face toward Captain Pring. Mr. Arnold was in a small quandary. He had no watch officer to relieve.

Captain Pring let him stew while he paced off to the leeward wing of the bridge and back. Then he spoke:

"I have stood the first watch for Mr. Chase, whom I have suspended from his duties, Mr. Arnold."



Pring grabbed, but his fingers missed; he fell headlong, shrieking.

"Yes sir," said the second mate.

"You will stand your regular trick. I may wish to leave the bridge."

"Yes sir."

Rapidly Captain Pring pointed out and identified the lights in sight, gave the approximate position of the ship and the course that the *Hearn* was holding. Then he went through the black wheelhouse, where the useless wheel loomed vaguely, deserted. He turned into the tiny chartroom and silently glowered at the detail chart on the table.

"That fat white-livered loblolly!" he whispered in a rage.

Arkwright, up there in the *Hearn*, should already have cut the ship loose. She had been towed past ledges of rock to leeward that, with this tidal current and the rising sea, would have served well to chew up the thin plates of the *Carib Trade*. Funk? Treachery? Had this breeze made him shake for the safety of this crew? Remembering how Arkwright had tried at the last moment to avert the collision, Pring was blackly doubtful of the man's guts.

The *Carib Trade* might even yet be dragged ignominiously to an anchorage in the bowl of St. Thomas harbor. And then the questions, the probings, the hair-splitting and suspicions of the underwriters; their startled realization of the ship's unseaworthy state—all that—would begin. If he could just hold her and get her under a few fathoms, he could laugh at them and hold out his palm.

Pring strode out upon the bridge again with the ship's position minutely in his mind. He stood there, feeling in his taut nerves the tug and strain of that blasted mighty hawser. The wind nagged at him.

Once he stirred and glanced around at the boat-deck, aware that a man was pacing there. Probably still Dave Chase. The suspended third mate had been hanging about as close to the bridge as he could get during his who' watch. Captain Pring nursed a sure conviction that he had young Chase in the wringer. But he had no time now to gloat over that circumstance.

This was the crisis. That coward ahead on the *Hearn* had failed him; now he must take action himself. He knew well it was no easy night for a shipwrecking. But seamen must face the risks of the sea.

"I'm facing it; let the stupid fools do the same!" he muttered. A broken towline was much more plausible in rough weather like this.

Without a word to Mr. Arnold, he descended the bridge ladder and went to his room under the wheelhouse. He slipped around his waist, under his tunic, a leather sheath containing a knife and marlinespike.

Down on the main deck he glided forward and slipped up to the forecastle head. At the ladder top he paused a moment to look back at the bridge. He could barely make out vague movement up there as the second mate paced back and forth; the man could not have seen him.

Crouching, Pring moved on. Behind the shelter of the windlass he halted. Its niggerhead was taking the strain of the towline; a good two hundred feet of spare line was coiled on deck.

The hand watching the towline was further forward, leaning low against the weather bulkhead clear of flying spray, motionless, probably dozing. Pring's coming did not disturb him.

Pring went to work. A bottle of acid would have done an easier, smoother job, but Pring had allowed himself enough time. He set to work with his knife on a section of the towline perhaps fifty feet from the end. It was no crude job of cutting strands; in the dark Pring weakened the big line yarn by yarn, with good judgment as to how much of its strength was going under the sharp blade of the knife.

The lookout stirred and stretched. Pring crouched motionless beside the coils. Unseen!

Two minutes later, he crept aft and returned to the bridge. He darted a malignant glance ahead, at the *Hearn*, pulling him so inevitably toward St. Thomas harbor, and then looked out over the black water on the starboard beam. There were black rocks in that black water, and the ship would soon be to windward of them.

Pring smiled in the dark secrecy of the night. In spite of Arkwright's cowardice, in spite of Dave Chase's eyes, in spite of his crew's unease, he would win now! They couldn't beat Captain Eustace Pring.

"I don't like the way she's riding in the seaway," he said abruptly to the second mate. "There's too much strain on that hawser."

"Yes sir," said Mr. Arnold.

"Rouse out some men and give her more scope," Captain Pring commanded. "Let her have about all the line you've got. Jump to it, Mister!"

"Yes sir," said Mr. Arnold dismally. He departed.

Minutes later, coil after coil of the hawser went sliding around the barrel of the windlass and out into the blackness between the ships.

Captain Pring remained on the bridge. He had no wish to be seen near that line, even if the break did occur quite blamelessly between the ships.

Arnold returned. He reported the job done. Pring drew a breath. But his eyes, unbidden, slid toward the dark mass of Number One lifeboat, resting on its chocks abaft the bridge. This would be one case in which the master did not go down with his ship. In good shape, that boat!

He started pacing. Step after step, back and forth, waiting, waiting. Eyes and ears and nerves and muscles straining.

Under his restless feet he felt a slight tremor in the ship. A wild yell tore through the night forward. Pring felt her head falling off as a gust of wind nuzzled at her bow.

"Towline's carried away!" bawled the lookout. "Towline's busted!"

"The towline, sir!" said Mr. Arnold shakily.

"Ah, yes," drawled Captain Pring. This time, he felt, it would be well to face disaster coolly. He caught up the signaling-lamp handy to his hand, and began calling the *Theodore Hearn*. Over his shoulder he spoke to the frightened mate:

"This is serious, Mr. Arnold. There are ledges to leeward, and no chance our anchors will hold in this sea. Swing out the starboard lifeboat."

"G-going to abandon, sir?"

"You heard the order. I must take every precaution. Move, Mister!"

With a moan Mr. Arnold moved. He had been over the side before, and he didn't like the prospect. His head turned toward the *Theodore Hearn*.

The *Hearn* was aware of the emergency. She was making a crowded turn to get back to the *Carib Trade*. Arkwright couldn't risk engines astern with that broken hawser trailing from her fantail, ready to foul her propeller.

Captain Pring had thought of that too. He smiled thinly while his finger worked the trigger of the lamp, flashing a stream of Morse across the water. He had to be doing something to quench any suspicions that might arise in the feeble minds of the men scurrying around on the deck below, aimless as ants in panic.

Shouts... voices... some not far from hysteria. They knew the danger. They could hear a sea breaking to leeward.

The *Hearn* came circling back, but in that rough sea Arkwright would never dare approach close enough to heave a line. No harm, then, in ordering men to stand by with heaving-lines. He leaned over the rail.

Close to Captain Pring's ear something exploded with a roar. He ducked, then swung around, with a red stab of light blazing in the corner of his eye. Aft on the boat deck! But what was it?

Arnold came clattering toward him. "The line-throwing gun, sir!" he shouted exultantly. "Dave, he's been standing by it... an' I think he's got a line across the *Hearn*, sir!"

Pring mashed his lips together. From the *Theodore Hearn*, in points

of light that the mates were reading, too, came a message: *"Have your line. Bending on our wire hawser. Take it away."*

Pring's fingers dug into the bridge rail. He mastered himself and cupped curving fingers to his mouth.

"Heave in on that line, below! Get it aboard! She's close to the rocks!"

A voice spoke to him from the boat-deck—Dave Chase's voice:

"I'll bear a hand. Even a suspended guy's got a right to help save his neck, hasn't he, Cap'n?"

Pring choked down his answer. Again he exhorted the deck to get the hawser aboard. The fools might part the light line in their eager strength. He stormed at them.

Nordholm was on deck, bossing that job. He was quietly commanding care. A moment later Pring made out Dave's voice:

"Any you fellas heave too hard on that line, I'll stick you in the gun to fire another across to her! Take it easy!"

Slowly the line came in, and then a heavier line and then the hawser, to secure the wire. The whole ship's company below was anticipating his words; manhandling the wire, belaying it surely, while the sound of the sea smashing on the rocks down wind grew louder and nearer.

"Go ahead!" bellowed a mighty voice on deck. "Take yer slack!"

A dozen other voices roared to the *Hearn* to go ahead. Responding to Nordholm's thin cry from the forecastle head, Pring flashed the order to Captain Arkwright. Perhaps Arkwright had an ace up his sleeve; perhaps that wire would part or pull away from the *Hearn's* stern. That would be convincing.

The *Hearn* eased ahead, dead slow. The slack came out of the wire. Grudgingly the *Carib Trade* lurched and followed.

Captain Pring could make out a group of shadowy figures forward, bunched around the windlass, staring ahead at the *Hearn* and at the navigation lights of the harbor of St. Thomas, opening up under the lifting mountains ahead. The deck was alive with men. Alert men.

In spite of his efforts, by the power of dumb chance and the officious meddling of Dave Chase the ship was entering sheltered waters.

"A man must be philosophical," Eustace Pring told himself, standing rigid in the weather wing of the bridge. "I'll collect more in damages from the blasted underwriters than I've put into this ship. And I've got Dave Chase on the beach . . . for life."

But though he told himself he should be content, he was not. He wanted to start his life ashore with her full insured value in his pocket. As for Chase, with his luck the blundering moron might easily fall into some easy job on the beach. Further, Dave Chase's testimony about the happenings on the bridge just before the collision might prove awkward. A frank, trustworthy young man!

Coldly Captain Eustace Pring came to a conclusion. He must do something decisive about Dave Chase himself. Something final.

The *Carib Trade* was anchored. Pumps hummed in the engine-room but all over the ship tired men were turning in to grab what sleep they could in the tag end of the night. A few hundred yards away gleamed the two anchor lights of the *Theodore Hearn.*

Mr. Arnold looked weary enough to make a poor watch-keeper. Captain Pring assigned him the job and told old Nordholm to sleep in till seven. The chief engineer, he knew, would turn the engine-room over to his third assistant, a callow youth clever at sleeping on his feet.

The matter of settling with Dave Chase engrossed Captain Pring. The third mate's room door was hooked back; he was not asleep in his bunk. That was a break. The framing of a plausible accident to a man asleep in his bunk presented more difficulties than a mishap to a man wandering the ship, too shaken to sleep or perhaps—Captain Pring nodded—drunk.

Pring had no intention of permitting any coarse suggestion of murder to arise. He went to the medical store and poured a little whisky into a small bottle, enough to put the odor of drink on a man's lips and clothes. With this in his pocket and his knife and marlinespike in the leather sheath under his tunic he set out to locate Dave Chase. The accident would depend upon where he was.

After a turn through wheelhouse and chartroom he moved quietly around on the small boatdeck. The line-throwing gun was back in its chest by the fiddley. No sign of Dave Chase. Captain Pring descended to the saloon deck. No third mate. His room was still empty.

Unpleasantly puzzled now, Captain Pring extended his search to the weather decks first. Was the man hiding from him? Had he somehow left the ship? Disquiet speeded his heartbeats.

He became aware that Mr. Arnold, above him, was standing in the port bridge wing looking down at a light moving across the water from the *Hearn*—a flashlight in a small boat.

Pring returned to the bridge. He nodded toward the approaching light.

"If Captain Arkwright is aboard that boat, tell him I have retired and am not to be disturbed," he ordered.

"Yes sir," said Arnold.

The handling of Arkwright must wait. He could not, of course, fulfill his threat to see Arkwright hang but by Peter! he could keep him sweating for years over the killing of a cop who was still very much alive. There could be a steady bit of money in it, too, out of Arkwright's pay.

In the port alleyway on the main deck he came to a dead stop. The mumble of the pumps reached him more plainly down here. He scowled. Those blasted pumps were all that kept her afloat. The *Hearn's* bow had done more than cut her up dead aft. Her shell plating was strained open in many places as far forward as the engine-room itself. Even with Dave Chase interfering, it was only a fluke that she still floated.

Only a fluke? His eyes narrowed as he stared unseeingly at the steel deck. Perhaps it was not yet too late to correct that fluke. There was plenty of water under her. And only three men, a kid engineer, a fireman and an oiler, dozed on watch in boiler- and engine-rooms. It should not be too hard—

He swung around and looked up and down the empty alleyway, dimly lighted by a bulb over the steel door that led down to the engine-room. Slowly he moved toward that door and swung it open. He froze, with glinting eyes.

On the narrow gridded platform at the head of the steel ladder Dave Chase stood, legs comfortably apart, leaning his elbows on the oily rail, gazing downward into the humming depths of the engine-room.

Pring's hand slid like a gliding snake toward the marlinespike in his leather sheath. This was perfect. A headlong fall from that greasy platform would puzzle nobody. He fixed his eyes on the back of Dave Chase's big head. He raised the short, heavy tool and brought it down with all the hate and muscle in him.

Dave Chase's head jerked sidewise. His shoulder twisted sinuously. The marlinespike rang on the pipe railing. It bounced out of Pring's stinging fingers. It clattered on the plates below.

Chase's big hands darted at him. They clamped around his elbows, sudden and sure. Chase's big face turned down at him, grim and unsurprised.

"Open doors start drafts, Cap'n. Lights throw shadows." Chase's deep voice rumbled out the words. "I've been waiting for you to tackle the pumps—and me."

"Take your hands off me, you stupid fool!" Eustace Pring cried. His voice was high, even shrill, hard to recognize. His wrenching efforts were smothered by that mighty grip but he could not restrain himself from struggling. Something drove him to struggle—something he could not control.

"That's just it," Dave Chase said flatly. " 'Stupid fool!' Just how dumb does a guy have to be, Cap'n, to hold a third mate's job in this one?"

Inexorably he spun Pring around, shifting grips with swift precision, and propelled him out into the alleyway.

"I gave you an order!" Pring snarled.

But there was more than power in Dave Chase's hands; there was finality.

"How dumb?" young Chase repeated slowly. "First that little shipping agent blows his top in the café an' hints you're up to something crooked. Then you put your ship across Cap'n Arkwright's bows and ring her astern, too, to top it. And a good hawser snaps—what was that, knife-work or a touch of acid? How dumb do I have to be, Cap'n?"

Pring was silent, trying to think. This man was not as stupid as he had reckoned. He must think fast.

"Not so dumb I can't figure your next one will be the pumps," Dave Chase said. "Well—"

His voice cut off in surprise. Pring twisted his head around. The fat figure of Captain Arkwright stood there, staring at them.

Eustace Pring writhed in body and soul. "What do you want?" he spat out, as harshly if he were not held prisoner by one of his own crew.

"Has your conscience got you at last, Captain Pring?" the master of the *Theodore Hearn* asked. The hollowness in his voice was made hollower yet by the steel tunnel of the alleyway.

"Give me a hand with this mutineer!" Pring cried. That was the line! Mutiny! "Help—"

"I've come to tell you to do your damnedest," Arkwright said wearily, ignoring Pring's words as completely as if he had not spoken. "I've had enough of you trying to ride me. You can't do it. I'd rather pay the price of manslaughter."

"Manslaughter?" Dave Chase asked with quick interest. "What manslaughter's that, Cap'n?"

"Don't you recognize me?" Arkwright asked. "You saw me kill that Havana policeman with a chair."

DAVE CHASE laughed and gave Eustace Pring a shake. "More dirty work a guy's got to be dumb to get!" he said. "That cop was lively enough huntin' 'round the *muelles* for you before we sailed."

"What?" gasped Captain Arkwright. "What's that you say?"

"And there were bits of bottle, not hunks of chair, in his hair when I brought him to," Dave added.

"Bottle?" Arkwright whispered. "I had no bottle in my hands! Bottle!" With sudden understanding, his thick fingers grabbed at Pring's throat.

Dave Chase fended him off with a quick shoulder.

"I'm handling this, Cap'n," he told Arkwright. He swung Eustace Pring around and backed him against the alley bulkhead, then relaxed his grip.

"You're going ashore—for good, Cap'n," he said in a level voice. "You just plain aren't smart enough to stay at sea and command men."

Captain Pring groped for words to express his fury and contempt.

"You stupid—" he began; then he stopped. Cold realization, like ice in his veins, crept over him that that word did not truly apply to Dave Chase, staring at him with almost unwilling contempt. Yes, the contempt was in Chase's eyes now, as he looked at Eustace Pring.

"I'm telling you, Cap'n," young Chase said, with iron in his voice. "You're through with the sea. It's too big for a small-brained guy like you."

He flung a rueful hand around to indicate the *Carib Trade*. "What you've left of your ship will start you in the junk business, maybe. Don't put in any claim to the underwriters."

"What? You dare—" But Pring's voice was only a croak.

Chase nodded his big head.

"I wouldn't dare live with myself, lettin' you get away with riskin' men's lives for a little lousy money, though I've no clear proof. Don't; that's all."

"You'll be on the beach too!" Pring flung at him. "I'll have your ticket—"

"No," said Dave Chase. "I'll be at sea, somehow, where I belong."

He shook his head earnestly. "I don't scare, Cap'n; I just don't scare. Try to blame that collision on me, and it'll get a going-over before the board that'll sure squeeze out into the open what you've been trying."

Captain Arkwright spoke sternly. "I can put in a word too, Captain Pring, and I will if I must."

Dave Chase lifted a finger toward the officers' quarters above.

"Mr. Nordholm's told me, an' Arnold and the helmsman too, that they know I nearly saved the ship. Your jingle to reverse her is marked down in the engine-room bell-book."

His eyes were earnest. "It's time you got it, Cap'n: Men aren't as dumb as you figure them, or as crooked, or as cowardly; and you aren't as smart as you think."

"You aren't as smart as you think!" The words burned deep into Eustace Pring's brain and though he denied them vehemently he knew himself to be cringing before the level eyes of Dave Chase and Captain Arkwright.

ABRUPTLY Arkwright laid a hand on Dave Chase's shoulder.

"You've told him," he said. "Not even I turned out to be as bad as he figured me. Chase, one of my officers is getting a promotion and I need a second mate—one with a conscience."

Dave Chase's eyes beamed.

Pring saw his chance. He wrenched away. Headlong he plunged through the engine-room door and flung himself at the ladder. He'd rouse the crew, and in the fighting—

His foot slipped on a greasy steel rung, and momentum carried his body hard against the rail. He grabbed for it, but his fingers missed their clutch. He fell headlong. The engine-room plates rose up at him. He shrieked.

But even in his terror he knew he had got away. He was too smart for them—too smart for the sea.

BIRDS ARE LIKE THAT

THE female phalarope, a wading seashore bird, is the only member of the winged phylum who exercises complete supremacy over her mate. Being larger and more powerful than her husband, she compels him to remain at home, hatch the eggs, and later care for the young, while she roams freely, even seeking new loves.

* * *

Conversely, the male rhinoceros hornbill imprisons his wife by plastering up their habitation, leaving only a tiny opening through which he passes food to his spouse and progeny. The male rhinoceros hornbill is the only bird possessing well-developed eyelashes.

* * *

Beebe has observed that in the Galapagos Islands birds sometimes become sterile and senile in the midst of food, warmth, and an absence of enemies.

* * *

That birds are constantly being victimized by cats is a fallacy. The two can be taught by association to tolerate one another and even to be friendly. Some years ago an Associated Press dispatch reported the rescue by a cat of a freezing canary in Oklahoma City.

* * *

We've all read how a goose was responsible for saving Rome. A possible descendant of that goose caused Patrolman L. Brandenberg of Cleveland to apprehend two fowl-nappers. The goose's appearance on the street aroused the patrolman's professional suspicion, and on investigation he found other geese about to be carried away.

* * *

A robin confined to a cage for seven years on release instantly flew to its former nest fifteen miles away.

* * *

Owls generally share their homes with squirrels, and petrels with otters.

* * *

Cliff-dwelling swallows bury their dead by sealing up the home hole and converting it into a sepulcher.

—By Simpson M. Ritter

MEN OF NO DISTINCTION AT ALL

by Doug Anderson & Ben Melnitsky



Kept up with the wrong Joneses.



The poor sport at the microphone.



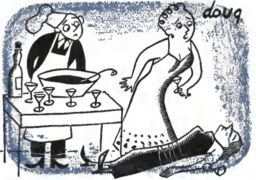
Kid whose father never heard of war surplus.



Movie director who wore a business suit to work.



The guy who applauded at the wrong time.



The host whose punch had too much punch.



Illustrated by Paul Brown

Seventh Cavalry

STANDING at rigid attention, the orderly saluted as much of the General as was visible. Since most of his Commanding Officer was underneath a side wall of his quarters, there was not a great deal to salute. But Army regulations require that an officer be saluted on recognition, and Private Fergus MacTavish had duly identified the spurred boots and the seat of the blue breeches with broad stripes of cavalry yellow which now confronted him. Therefore his right hand snapped up to the visor of his forage cap.

Regulations also direct that a salute be held until it is returned. There was no sign of acknowledgment except kicking legs, which seemed insufficient. Though it was a raw early morning in the cold winter of 1875, the orderly, stiff and straight, never even shivered. From beneath the house came the General's muffled voice, murmuring endearments, responded to by soft whines and whimperings. The keen blue eyes in Private MacTavish's dour Scot's face lit up and glowed.

Boots scuffled, and at last the officer emerged. His face was dirt-grimed except for streaks licked clean by a canine tongue. Still he did not return the salute. He could not, for his arms were full.

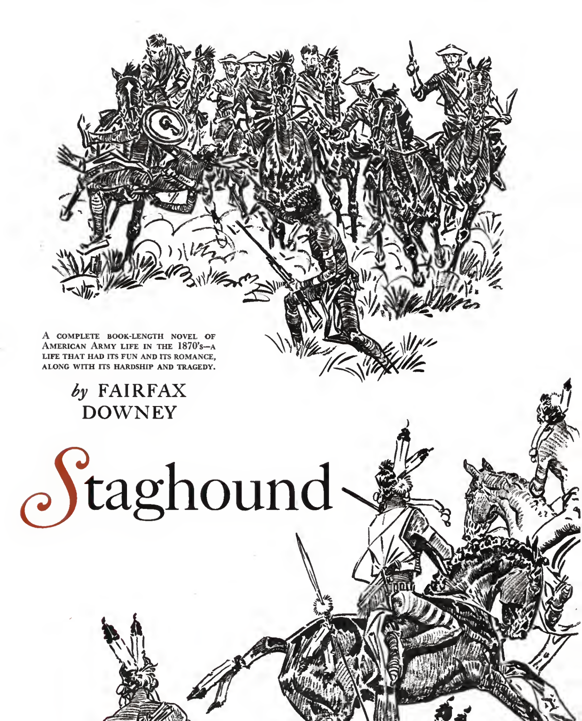
"MacTavish," roared General Custer, "stop standing there like a statue! Give me a hand with these pups."

BEFORE daybreak and the sounding of *First Call*, Eliza, the colored cook, had called from the kitchen to the Custers' bedroom:

"Ginnel, that Maida she's gone. Cain't fin' that dawg nowhere."

Custer leaped up and flung on his uniform. He had known that Maida, the big Scottish staghound which was one of his favorites, would whelp soon, and had been careful to call her into the house these cold nights. Now she had somehow broken out, and after the manner of her kind had gone off to have her litter in seclusion.

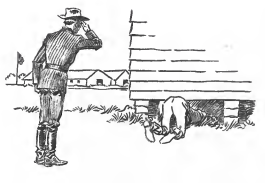
General Custer, some declared, often displayed more devotion to dogs than to people. Every horrible fate which might have overtaken Maida and her progeny raced through his head. Rattlesnakes usually stayed underground this cold weather, but some hungry reptile might have waked and crawled from its hole. Perhaps



A COMPLETE BOOK-LENGTH NOVEL OF AMERICAN ARMY LIFE IN THE 1870's—A LIFE THAT HAD ITS FUN AND ITS ROMANCE, ALONG WITH ITS HARDSHIP AND TRAGEDY.

by FAIRFAX DOWNEY

Staghound



Regulations direct that a salute be held until it is returned.

a pack of prowling coyotes had attacked, though they would never dare face a mother staghound unless crazed by starvation. Worst peril of all were the "friendly" Indians hanging around Fort Abraham Lincoln. An arrow through the throat would have finished Maida. Soon afterward a kettle in some wigwam would have been boiling with a prized Indian delicacy—puppy stew.

But Custer's dash through and around the house had ended in his finding Maida and her litter safe beneath it. Nobody but the General or his orderly could have touched the big bitch with impunity; these two she loved. Now she walked proudly behind the master who was carrying her offspring. Beside her marched the Scot whom Custer some years ago had detailed and dubbed with a grin his Dog-Tender-in-Chief. No less proud than Maida, MacTavish let his hand rest on her noble head.

The splendid animal moved with the grace and dignity of her kind. Like the other staghounds in Custer's pack, Maida caught the interest of every newcomer to the Seventh Cavalry, for her breed was little known in the United States. Scots first had brought staghounds to Canada. Among Maida's forebears perhaps was a mascot of one of the Highland regiments who often took these deerhounds or "rough greyhounds," as they sometimes were called, with them on foreign service. She belonged to the family of hounds of the chase, the group which includes Afghan hounds, Borzois or Russian wolfhounds, Irish wolfhounds, greyhounds and whippets. Maida stood a good thirty inches high at the shoulders and weighed close to one hundred pounds—larger and stronger than the greyhound she resembled, and nearly as fleet. Her crisp, shaggy coat was red-fawn, and her curved tail, carried like a banner, was slightly feathered, as were her legs. In full measure she was endowed with keen nose and eyes, speed, stamina and courage—qualities in staghounds depended upon for centuries by the Highland clans to bring the antlered stag to bay—qualities which served General Custer as certainly when he hunted elk or the huge humped buffalo.

Wild whoops from Custer heralded his entrance into the kitchen and on into the parlor with his armful of puppies, their mother and the beaming MacTavish close behind. The noise brought Mrs. Custer hastening from the bedroom. As if by royal right, Maida lay down on the best rug and stretched out. The General knelt and with infinite gentleness placed his squirming burden at her side. Unerringly the still-unseeing puppies found their way to their interrupted breakfast.

A deep admiring silence was broken by the cook Eliza. Since that day in the midst of the War Between the States when she had come into Custer's camp a slave, there to find freedom and give him and his a lifetime of loyal service, she had been a privileged character. Frowning down at the pups, Eliza began counting:

"One, two, three, fo', five, six, seben! Lawsy, lawsy! Seben mo' dawgs crowdin' an' eatin' us outa house an' home!" Indignantly she demanded of Mrs. Custer: "Miss Libby, you know how many dawgs that makes we got? Fo'ty, Miss Libby! Fo'ty houn' dawgs!"

Lovely Elizabeth Custer smiled with resignation, knowing she could deny her beloved husband nothing. Anyway, a pack of only forty was an improvement. When they had been stationed in Louisiana and Texas after the War, the Custer kennels had been crammed and clamorous with no less than eighty.

"Ginnel, we got to get rid of these here." Eliza was unappeased.

"Seven new staghounds for the Seventh Cavalry!" Custer cried jubilantly. Then his voice grew reproachful. "Why, Eliza, you wouldn't put these poor little things out in the cold, would you?" he asked.

"You jes' give 'em away, that's all," Eliza directed. But Custer only laughed, and the cook retired muttering to her stove.

The two men and Mrs. Custer were bending over the nursing litter for close inspection. The marvel and heartwarming appeal of newborn puppies, in spite of the hundreds they had known, held them in its spell. Their mother raised her head to regard them fondly. Mrs. Custer began scheming ahead how she could obtain some extra cow's milk, hard to come by on the frontier, when it was time to wean them in a month or so.

"MacTavish, are you sure Blucher's the father?" Custer questioned. "Might be Cardigan."

"Blucher and nae doot, sir," the Scot stated. "See their markings, sir. Sandy red like him. Aye, and their muzzles and the tips of their ears, black like the true breed."

Out on the parade ground a trumpet sounded. MacTavish straightened, a far-away look in his blue eyes—as if he were back in his native Highlands and had heard the notes of bagpipes, fitter music to signalize the birth of staghounds. His clansmen ancestors had tended those splendid dogs since the ancient days when none of lower rank than an earl might possess one, and they were so highly prized that a leash of staghounds might purchase the reprieve of a nobleman condemned to death. He spoke his thought aloud.

"The royal dog of Scotland. The dogs of a chieftain."

He looked straight at Custer, and his eyes gleamed with such loyalty as lit those of his forefathers when they rallied to the standard of Robert the Bruce or Bonnie Prince Charlie.

Custer smiled, far from displeased. "Just the same, MacTavish, don't let me catch you neglecting my greyhounds or foxhounds," he said.

Suddenly Scotty stooped down again. "Alake!" he exclaimed sorrowfully. "The puir wee one!"

ONE of the pups, at first half concealed by two others of the litter, had been crowded out by them and lay revealed. He was weak and sickly-looking in contrast to his lusty brothers and sisters. Crawling feebly, he tried to find a dug again, but could not until he was helped. Mrs. Custer uttered a little cry of pity, but the General remarked philosophically:

"Ah, well, we're lucky there's only one like that in the litter. He'll never run with the pack, that one. He can't live long. I hate to do it, but we'd best drown the poor little fellow. It'll give Maida a better chance to rear the rest."

Survival of the fittest—that was the law of nature. Here on the frontier its relentless working, for man or beast, was daily evident. The Indian wars were just such a merciless test. Before the victorious white man, the red man was going down; and though he was fighting his doom, it was sealed.
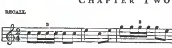
Tears in her eyes, tender-hearted Elizabeth Custer opened her mouth to protest, but shut it, words unspoken;

her husband's will was law to her, and she knew what the decision bad cost him as a dog-lover. MacTavish dared to plead. "Sir—" he began.

"That'll do," Custer shut him off. "Make it as quick and easy as possible, MacTavish."

Trustingly Maida let the orderly lift the puppy from her side. MacTavish could have carried the small creature in one hand, but he held him cradled in both arms as he strode out. For once he did not salute.

CHAPTER TWO



THE Army recruiting station at the Battery in New York City was enjoying a record day. An immigrant ship, which had docked the night before, started the ball rolling with a half-dozen German men and boys clumping into the station. Recruiting Sergeant Mike Quinn, seated at a table in the shabby front room, looked up, grinned broadly and rubbed his hands.

"*Wie gehts! Willkommen,* Dutchies," he greeted them in German saturated with brogue. He had reason to be delighted. Germans often were the best recruits signed up by the U. S. Army these days, barring the Irish, of course.

"Want to join up, do ye?" Quinn asked.

"*Ja, mein Herr,*" the leader spoke up. "*Zu befehl.*"

Quinn herded them in for examination by the surgeon.

The next applicants were not so promising. Came a furtive little man, who glanced nervously over his shoulder. Quinn's shrewd glance spotted him as a bank or store clerk. Likely they'd be finding a shortage in his accounts, and he was just a couple jumps ahead of the sheriff. Never mind. Sign him up—the Army needed recruits badly. Probably the sheriff would never chase him all the way out to the frontier.

After the clerk appeared a tall, thin fellow whose look of habitual meekness was half-submerged by an air of desperation. Quinn grinned broadly. Long experience had taught him types.

"And how did yez leave the Missus?" he inquired.

The thin man shuddered visibly. Undoubtedly running away from trouble at home. Rather than stand one more day of a shrewish, nagging wife, he was ready to face a whole tribe of bloodthirsty Indians.

"All right, all right," the sergeant said. "Pass the surgeon and you're in the Army." He bent a quizzical look on the fugitive husband and clerk. "Now the two of ye best give me a couple of nice new names. 'Should ould acquaintance be forgot?' " he sang, chuckling at his own wit.

But it was the last recruit of the day that baffled Quinn completely.

The doorway framed a tall, sturdy young man. He stood erect, shoulders back. An eager light gleamed in his gray eyes. He took off his cap, revealing close-clipped sandy hair. The Sergeant could not help responding to the warmth of his engaging grin.

"And what can I do for ye?" Quinn inquired. This chap probably wanted street directions. Surprisingly the late-comer declared:

"I want to reënlist."

"Do ye now?" Quinn spoke sarcastically. "It's one of thim college byes ye are, and playing a prank. Be off."

"No, you're wrong, Sergeant. I have been to college at Yale for two years, but I'm in earnest. I want to *re*-enlist."

" '*Re*-enlist,' is it? You're too young to join up for the first time."

"I'm not. I'm twenty-one."

"So? Name, former rank and rigimint?"

"Peter Shannon—Trumpeter, K Troop, 4th Cavalry. Service in Texas in the Kiowa and Comanche campaigns in '73 and '74."

"Your papers?" Peter produced them, and Quinn ran rapidly over them. One enlistment. Honorable discharge—character "*Excellent.*" All in order.

Quinn grunted. " 'Tis a commission ye ixpect?"

Peter chuckled. "I never heard of those being passed out at a recruiting station. If I can win one from the ranks, that'd be fine."

"Gintleman ranker," Quinn sniffed. "Well, I'll ask ye no quistions—"

"And I'll tell you no lies."

"Go on in and see the surgeon and the officer, and niver blame Mike Quinn for what happens to ye."

For the second time Peter Shannon held up his right hand and took oath to serve his country in the Army of the United States.

PETER SHANNON had been only a boy during the War Between the States, but even as a lad of nine he had served as a dispatch rider for the home guard of his native State of Pennsylvania when it mobilized to meet the high tide of the Confederacy flowing north to Gettysburg. In the years that followed, he and his father, a former captain of Union cavalry, had ridden together many miles, fighting over John Shannon's battles. "Pray God we never see another war in my lifetime or yours," John Shannon had often said. But he was passing over the fact that the United States had begun fighting other wars when its great one was scarcely over—old wars flaring up again, the Indian wars. Shannon, Sr., more or less ignored them, like most of the country, but not the boys. Peter and his age were reading dime novels beginning, "The sharp crack of a rifle rang out, and another redskin bit the dust;" and they were playing "Soldiers and Indians." In the West and Southwest blue-clad troopers were playing that game in grim earnest. Protecting the wagon-trains of the settlers and the railroad builders, they were fighting off the savage attacks of the red man, who was resisting the invasion of his hunting-grounds to the death.

Incredibly Peter Shannon at sixteen had found himself plunged into the midst of it. On a summer visit to his uncle in Texas, he barely escaped with his life from a bloody Kiowa raid in which his uncle and most of his wagoners were massacred. Enlisting in the 4th Cavalry as a trumpeter, the boy served through hard campaigns on the Staked Plains. In charges with drawn saber he tasted the fierce excitement of battle and learned that his father had told him truly of its bitterness when comrades were shot from their saddles and his best friend died under a Comanche lance. Yet a deep love of the Army had grown in him. It had been cruelly hard to obey





"He'll never run with the pack, that one."

when his family insisted, for the sake of his future, that he take his discharge and go to college.

Now, incredibly again, he was back in the Service once more, on a train steaming West to rejoin his regiment. It had happened so swiftly Peter had difficulty realizing it actually was fact. His mind ran through the last few months which had so altered his life:

The recent death of his beloved mother had left him in a state of such restless misery that he felt he could not endure to return to Yale and finish the spring term. He wanted to go back into the Army, he told his father.

John Shannon shook his head. "If I'd known you were set on a military career, I'd have tried to get you an appointment to West Point when your time was up in the 4th Cavalry," he declared. "Otherwise, there's no future. A commission from the ranks? You've got a Chinaman's chance, with the Army cut down to the size it is. Be sensible, Peter."

But in the end John Shannon gave in. Peter could buy his discharge next fall and finish college. In any event, his son was no longer a boy but a man. And in the heart of the former captain of cavalry a love of the Service lingered too.

Back in the gallant 4th, on active duty in the Southwest! His mount, the black Morgan horse Justin, was with the regiment. So was his good friend and mentor, First Sergeant Sam Smith. So was the Adjutant, Major Lindsay—and so was the Major's daughter Sally Ann. For two long years he had not seen them, although many letters, back and forth, had kept him in touch.

Of late months Sally Ann hadn't been writing very frequently—explained that the post had been so gay with hops, picnics and hunting parties that she'd been unable to find time to put pen to paper; and besides she'd see him if she came East this summer. Usually when she did get around to writing, there was altogether too much mention of dashing young officers. Of course she had to have some fun, but such carryings-on were scarcely proper for an engaged girl. She had told him she'd wait for him always—that last night with the trumpets sounding *Taps* in harmony, when he held her in his arms and kissed her.

Peter gazed out of the day-coach window at the big yellow moon beaming down on the plains, as the train rattled through the night.

"Moon-struck, Shannon? What's her name?" The corporal in charge of the recruit detachment was standing in the aisle, grinning down at him.

"I was just thinking it'll be good to get back to the old outfit," Peter explained, reddening a little.

" 'Old' outfit? What do you mean, 'old'?"

"What I say, Corp. We date straight back to the 1st Dragoons, which later became the 1st Cavalry. In '61 the First furnished cadre to form my regiment. It took part in seventy-six actions in the War. Since then it's seen a lot of tough Indian fighting. Yes siree, don't let anybody tell you different. It's a fine old outfit—the Fourth Cavalry."

"The Fourth? You ain't going to the Fourth."

"The devil I'm not! I asked for my old outfit when I re-upped. That's my right as a previous service man. I asked the captain at the recruiting station."

"That old goat don't pay no attention to such stuff. I'm tellin' you this here draft and every batch of recruits that hits the depot at Leavenworth these days is marked for—"

"No! I'm going to the Fourth. I tell you—"

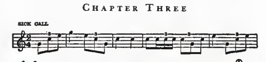
The corporal guffawed loudly. "You're telling who, soldier?" Mockingly he hummed the old bugle march: "You're in the Army Now."

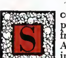
"Uh-huh, Private Shannon," he finished. "You're going to the Seventh Cavalry, Old Curley—Brevet Major Gen'ral, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer—commanding."



Could a Highlander drown a hound of that breed?

Chapter Three





Scotty MacTavish, the sickly staghound puppy in his arms, marched slowly away from Officers' Row. He headed across Fort Abraham Lincoln's broad parade-ground, inclosed by quarters and barracks, toward the stables that lay beyond. There he would find a water bucket for the execution of his orders to drown the dog.

His steps began to drag until they slowed to the tempo of a funeral march. He groaned aloud and began to mutter over to himself lines from his favorite poet, Bobbie Burns—those moving stanzas to a little field mouse, its nest cleft open by a plowshare. Gazing down at the charge he carried, he recited:

> *Wee, sleekit, cow'rin, tim'rous beastie,*
> *O, what a panic's in thy breastie!*
> *Thou need na start awa sae hasty,*
> *Wi' bickering brattle!*
> *I wad be laith to rin, an' chase thee,*
> *Wi' murd'ring pattle!"*

Destroying this puppy was bitter compulsion. Yet few soldiers dared disobey a direct order from Custer. Too well the Scot remembered that grim occasion in the South after the War when the General's brigade was doing unwelcome Reconstruction duty. One of his Michigan regiments had grown increasingly homesick. After being complimented on their smart appearance at a review, the men decided that it must be their soldierly qualities that were keeping them from discharge and home. The next day as sloppy and disorderly an aggregation as ever disgraced the uniform paraded. Here was mutiny or close to it, and Custer was furious. His blue eyes flashed fire and his yellow curls tossed like the mane of an angry lion. He put the whole regiment under arrest and commenced court-martial trials. One sergeant was condemned to death as the ringleader.

MacTavish, with a shudder, vividly recalled that day when the sentence was to be carried out. The entire brigade was drawn up under arms. Custer, though his life had been threatened, rode along the line, utterly fearless. A wagon rumbled up with the sergeant and a deserter seated on their coffins. The doomed men climbed down, were blindfolded and placed before a firing squad. "Ready!" The carbines rose. Then, at the last moment, the provost marshal led aside the sergeant, granted

a reprieve by Custer. When tbe volley rang out, the deserter died alone, but the sergeant keeled over in a faint. There was no further mutiny.

MacTavish, feeling queasy in his stomach, quickened his step. In the supply-train's stables be laid the staghound puppy on a heap of straw, found a water bucket and filled it. His soul in torture, the Scot picked up the puppy again. Its warm little body snuggled against his broad chest. He pulled it away and poised it over the bucket.

No, he would not! But he must. Before this, he bad mercifully destroyed dogs dying of distemper or suffering from a fatal injury, and he had done away with just such sickly puppies as this.

But never a staghound. That made the difference.

Man has always picked a favorite among the hundred or more breeds of dogs he has developed. An embracing fondness for all dogs he may have, but usually one variety stands first in his heart. So it was with this American soldier who as a young man had come over from Scotland, where the staghound or Scottish deerhound was so bighly prized. That native of the Highlands was all the more cherished because it nearly had become extinct in those desperate years after the Battle of Culloden in 1746, when Bonnie Prince Charlie and the clans had met final defeat at the hands of the English. Had not Sir Walter Scott himself acclaimed the staghound, mighty in strength and stature, faithful and courageous, as "the most perfect creature of Heaven"? Could a Highlander drown a hound of that breed, however weak and sickly, wben skilled care might save it?

Never! MacTavish drew back and thrust the pail aside with his foot.

He knew the risk he ran. Custer seemed to have a way of discovering almost everything that happened in the regiment. The pup would have to be well hidden, and milk provided for him.

Sudden inspiration struck the Scot. Yonder in his stall stood Old Pizen, the meanest mule in the 7th Cavalry's wagon-train. Nobody ventured into that stall except Old Pizen's driver, and he entered it only with reluctance. Far better than an iron-studded door, under lock and key, were that mule's heels. His stall could serve as sanctuary for the staghound puppy. The driver, a friend of MacTavish's, would keep his mouth shut.

Scotty walked over. He spoke in the soothing tones of one who understands animals. Old Pizen's long ears swiveled around, but did not lie flat back against his neck. He listened with attention, and the ears flipped appreciatively. Here, plainly, was a man aware of the dignity and sterling worth of a much-abused and put-upon mule. At Scotty's request, Old Pizen moved over, and the orderly entered the stall and made a bed for the pup in straw underneath the manger. The mule lowered his head to the length of his halter, emitting a gentle snort. Evidently the small guest was welcome.

MacTavish's mouth set in a straight line of satisfaction. General Custer, wbo had charged Rebel batteries and Indian villages sputtering with the fire of repeating rifles, would not ligbtly face the terrific wallop packed by Old Pizen's iron-shod hoofs.

For days the life of the staghound hung in the balance. Scotty lavished painstaking nursing on him, and all his wisdom in the care of dogs. He spent his pay for milk, and even dared borrow an occasional cupful from Eliza; sbe gave it with grudging suspicions but said nothing. Old Pizen stood vigilant guard over his ward. Despite Custer, Pizen's driver and the soldiers who saw the puppy kept mum, enjoying slipping something over on the Old Man.

At last it became unmistakable that the dog would pull through and do his part to carry on his ancient breed. The once feeble little animal grew so active that MacTavish had to make a small barness for him and tie him to a staple in the stall, or he would have wandered out through the stable. His coat, more yellow than sandy red like the rest of his litter, grew with the richness. His body developed strength and sinew.



Evidently the small guest was welcome.

Dark brown eyes, black-rimmed, watched eagerly in the shadows of the stall for Scotty. Yips of joy, quickly hushed, greeted bim.

"So you ken me," said MacTavish, petting him. "Then must you be known to me. It's time that you bore a name."

MacTavish did not need to take long thought. His name must be Bran.

Famed in legend and tales of the Highlands and in life as well is the name of Bran the Staghound. In Gælic myth he was the dog of Fingal, hero of Caledonia—ancient Scotland. So fierce a guardian was that huge hound that his master must needs tie him when he engaged in a single combat with an enemy champion; and nothing less than a stone pillar served to hold him when he plunged against his chain. In after years every superior staghound was likened to Bran; a proverb ran, "If not Bran, it's Bran's brother," and that was the highest compliment Scots could pay. MacTavish in his own boyhood in Scotland had known a famous dog that bore the name. That Bran in 1844 had singlehanded killed two unwounded stags in forty-five minutes.

"Aye, you are well named, Bran," MacTavish told his dog.

Bran grew fast—puppy yips changed to deep-throated barks. MacTavish or the stable guard hushed him, and he fell obediently silent; but sooner or later he would betray himself. He would have done so already except that Custer's dogs roamed everywhere around the post, and the young staghound's soundings-off were mistaken for theirs. Not much longer could he be kept tied up in Old Pizen's stall, with the stealthy walks on leash at night, which Scotty gave him, his only exercise. His health demanded that he be loosed to go bounding across the plains in the runs and hunts that were his birthright.

In increasing distress poor MacTavish cudgeled his brains. What was he to do? Add Bran to the pack and trust he would never be noticed among so many? That would never do. General Custer knew every one of his dogs intimately, and would be certain to spot the newcomer. If he did discover Bran's identity, then might he welcome the fine dog his orderly had succeeded in raising against all odds? Not Custer. He never forgave disobedience of orders.

Scotty sat in the dark stable with his arms around Bran's neck and mourned. His attachment to this crea-



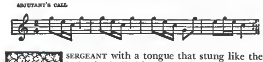
Peter was too angry to be awed. He spoke out vehemently.

ture whose life he had saved had grown close. Now his Scot's logic told him that two moves only were possible: He could ship the dog to his sister in Canada, or risk the action his commanding officer would take when he found the dog. The Scot knew well enough what that action would be. The animal would be sent away anyway, and Private Fergus MacTavish would find himself in the guardhouse.

"I canna part wi' thee," he whispered in broad Scots into a silken ear. Bran wagged his tail violently and licked the hands around his neck. "But I maun send 'e awa, to be my dog nae mair."

Through the doorway he watched without interest a detachment of recruits arriving at the post. He could have no inkling that in their ranks marched the answer to his dilemma.

Chapter Four



A SERGEANT with a tongue that stung like the lash of a bullwhip marched the recruit detachment up the road to Fort Abraham Lincoln, paying particular attention to the rear of the column.

"Heads up, shoulders back, you bunch of baboons!" he barked. "Try and look like the soldiers you ain't. 'Twas a bad day for the Seventh when it drew a lot of rookies what march like they was in a sack race."

The sergeant's comparison was painfully apt, as sergeants' remarks often are. Most of the recruits shuffling along in new cavalry boots, their dark blue blouses hanging in folds and their lighter blue breeches a size or so too large—company tailors would have plenty of alterations to make—did resemble animated sacks.

"Eyes front, you Bowery bums!" he roared. "Don't be lookin' back at them saloons in Bismarck 'cross the river, with your tongues hangin' out. It'll be many a day 'fore you get a pass into town, or a snort at the sutler's, either. 'Fore then I'll sweat that rotgut licker outa you!"

An absconding clerk still was glancing furtively about him, but a runaway husband, basking in newfound freedom, had become jaunty and smiling.

"Wipe that silly smile off your mug, you!" shouted the sergeant. "Think you don't gotta know how to march in the cavalry? Think all you do is traipse around on the back of some poor long-sufferin' hoss, do you? I'll learn you. Get in step, you." He started chanting cadence:

"Left, left, left, right, left. Left, left, left my wife and forty-seven children."

The fugitive husband moaned, recoiled and stumbled into the file ahead, while the sergeant swore sulphurously at him and chanted again:

"Left, left, had a good home and he left."

A ripple of laughter ran through the ranks. The sergeant yelled for silence and reminded his charges they were marching at attention. Gazing heavenward, he besought a just Deity to explain the affliction of such a draft on a deserving and respectable regiment. Except for the first squad, he declared, this was the most worthless and unutterably hopeless batch of recruits it ever had been his misfortune to encounter in twenty years of service.

Since General Custer and other officers likely would be watching, the sergeant had formed his first squad craftily. A big Bavarian, a foreign decoration on his chest, marched as guide. Peter Shannon was Number One; a single stripe or "hash-mark" sewn on his left sleeve showed he had served one enlistment. Beside him Jim Galt, a veteran, tried hard to disguise his limp; he wore two hash-marks and a Corps badge. Germans completed the squad. Custer would view the head of the column with approval—if he did not notice the black scowl on the face of the Number One. Peter was still boiling with furious resentment at the careless indifference or deliberate disregard of the recruiting officer who had railroaded him into the Seventh Cavalry in the face of his request to rejoin his old regiment.

"Chirk up, young Shannon," Galt urged out of the side of his mouth. "Don't go causing trouble for yourself."

Ever since hearing Peter's angry complaint, the veteran had been arguing against his making an issue of it. "Wait your time," he advised. "The Seventh's a pretty fair outfit. It fought all right in a lively scrap with the Cheyennes at the Washita, and it's made some good scouts. There's real action ahead, I hear tell. Trust Custer for that. My brigade charged alongside his in the War, and he's a fighter, if there ever was one.

"Don't be bull-headed now. You know the Army. No C.O.'s going to transfer a previous service man with a good record, not if he can help it. Keep quiet and write your people in the Fourth Calvary to put in for you."

But Peter would not listen. Hardly had the recruit detachment entered the post when he was demanding an interview with the Adjutant.

"All right, all right," growled the sergeant. "That's just who you're seein'. Colonel Cooke's gotta assign this crowbait to the diffrunt companies, and when most of 'em see what they get, there won't be no long, rousin' cheers."

THE formidable figure of the Adjutant loomed over the young soldier who entered the office, removed his cap and snapped to attention. Cooke stood close to six-feet-four in his boots. A magnificent pair of those whiskers, christened "burnsides" or "sideburns" after the Union general, Ambrose Burnside, jutted out from his cheeks. Without make-up he could have stepped on the stage and played the British character, *Lord Dundreary*, in "Our American Cousin" or, donning helmet and cuirass, have ridden with the British L[illegible]ards, unsuspected as a Yankee. His fellow-officers of the Seventh called him "Queen's Own" Cooke. In the War he had won brevet rank—an award for gallantry or merit—of lieutenant-colonel, but now in the reduced Army his actual rank was first lieutenant.

"Sir," Peter addressed him, "Private Shannon, recruit detachment, has permission to speak to the Adjutant."

"Wait till I look over your papers. Stand at ease." As he read, Cooke spoke half to himself. "Mmmmm. Fair enough. One enlistment. Active service in Texas. Like to have been in that Palo Duro affair myself. Ah! A trumpeter. That'll tickle the General. We've got the best music in the Service. The band always plays the Seventh into action. You're in luck, Trumpeter."

Peter could no longer contain himself. A torrent of wrathful expostulation burst from him. He dressed down the recruiting officer in terms referred to in the Articles of War as "disrespectful and insubordinate language toward a superior officer." His loyal acclaim of the 4th Cavalry demoted every other regiment in the Army to the rank of a disciplinary battalion. He'd serve in the Fourth or nowhere, he ended defiantly.

Cooke heard him out, then said calmly: "Been a civilian too long, haven't you? You'll have to learn again how a soldier talks—and how he obeys. Application for transfer denied. That's all."

His face crimson, Peter answered through set teeth: "I want to see the Commanding Officer. That's my right according to regulations, and you can't deny it."

"Guardhouse lawyer, eh?" the Adjutant remarked. "All right. Go ahead and see General Custer, and heaven help you!"

It was unfortunate that Peter found Custer on horseback. Any man on foot is at a disadvantage when he must look up at a mounted man; and when the rider was George Armstrong Custer, that heroic figure whose dashing war exploits and Indian fights were already an American legend, then the handicap was increased a hundred fold. But Peter was too angry to be awed. He spoke out vehemently.

Custer was forbearing. He liked the looks of this clean-cut young fellow. Despite his own fierce pride in the Seventh, he did not resent Peter's pæans to the Fourth.

"I understand," he said soothingly. "You're right, the Fourth Cavalry is a first-rate regiment. I knew General Mackenzie, a fine leader. His Adjutant, Major Lindsay, is a friend of mine. That pretty little daughter of his—"

Peter, diverted for a moment by the mention of Sally Ann, flared up again and repeated his demand for transfer. Still unruffled, Custer replied:

"I'll consider your transfer later. Meanwhile, give the Seventh a chance, soldier. I've got a vacancy for a corporal-trumpeter, and you're in line for it."

"I don't care about any rank here, sir," Peter stormed. "All I want is my right to—"

Few dared face up so to Old Curley. The continued restraint of the quick Custer temper was remarkable.

"Listen," the General ordered evenly. "There's fighting ahead for Seventh. Every sign points to a big campaign against the Sioux and Cheyennes before the summer's over. No soldier with your record would want to pull out on the eve of action."

Peter lost control. "I tell you," he shouted, "the Fourth has seen more action and will see more than the Seventh ever—"

He gasped, stricken into sudden silence. Never would he forget the apparition glaring down on him. Sparks seemed to shoot from the blue eyes. Clenched teeth shone white under the bristling mustache. Confederate troopers and red warriors had seen that look just before a flashing saber cut them down.

General Custer yelled to an orderly standing some distance away:

"MacTavish, take this recruit to the captain of Headquarters Company and tell him the man's to have two weeks' stable police on my orders. If there's any further trouble, he's to stand a court-martial."

A shaken young soldier saluted, faced about and followed the orderly.

ASSEMBLY



Government Ghosts" was Army slang for stable police because of the white garments they wore to protect their uniforms. Peter Shannon, clad in his stable frock, looked like a particularly forlorn and disconsolate wraith. Never before in his military career had he been given company punishment; it would stand against his record. And his chances of rejoining his beloved Fourth Cavalry seemed more remote than ever.

As a severer penalty for his insubordinate conduct, he had been assigned to the mule stables of the supply train, a duty dreaded by many soldiers. Mules were far more jealous of their rights than the average horse—rights earned by hard labor. With heels or teeth they resent trifling, roughness or indignity. Yet once they sense you would treat them justly, you seldom have trouble with them. Peter, who had learned how to handle mules in the Fourth Cavalry, had no difficulty. Long ears failed to flaunt a danger signal when, speaking softly, he entered a stall.

He plied brush and shovel with vigor, taking no chance on a court-martial. Day after day of back-breaking work dragged on. If a man rode or drove an animal, caring for it was much less of a chore. But this business of being chambermaid for scores of other men's mules was no bed of roses. Peter, remembering from his mythology that Hercules had cleaned the Augean stables by turning a river into them, often thought that he would be willing to dig a channel from the Missouri River through to the supply-train stables for the same purpose.

But there was one stable he was spared—there was something mysterious about that. Why was he never sent to Stable B? His curiosity increased.

Then one day a new corporal in charge of the stable police detail ordered Peter down to B. "I'll give you a pointer, rookie," the non-com warned him. "Watch out for the big mule in right corner stall at the far end. His name is Old Pizen and he lives up to it. If those heels of his ever get a good-swipe at you, you'll go out through the roof. They'll pick you up in Bismarck across the river and turn you in for being in town without a pass."

"Thanks, I'll look out," Peter answered. "I've got troubles enough."

He worked down the stable toward Old Pizen. As he approached, he began to hear strange sounds. That was barking, not braying. Some dog must have strayed into the mule's stall. A noise of scuffling and snorts, punctuating the barks, indicated that the canine intruder was taking long chances on mayhem or sudden death. Peter dropped his implements and broke into a run.

He saw a half-grown staghound standing on his hindlegs in the stall and pawing at Old Pizen's ribs. Bran, broken loose from his tether under the manger, was playing with his long-eared friend. Pizen bent back a supple neck and nipped at him genially. The barks and snorts waxed louder.

"Here, here!" Peter called. "Fun's fun, but somebody might get hurt. You come out of there, pup. Here!" He whistled to the dog urgently.

Bran looked around but paid him no other heed. He did not know this soldier. His tongue lolled out in a canine grin, and he barked joyously in his sport with Old Pizen. Now a strategic move occurred to him. He shifted back to the mule's haunches, where nips could not reach him. Here he could do a bit of nipping of his own. In the manner of his forefathers pulling down a stag, Bran took hold of Old Pizen's right hind leg just above the hock.

Peter shouted frantically: "Let go! Come here, sir! You'll get kicked to Kingdom Come!"

Bran meant to take only a light grip, but he did not know his own young strength and the sharpness of his teeth. Old Pizen emitted a squeal of startled pain, and swung his big body to one side, crowding the dog against the side of the stall. More than a few times mules have crushed men to death with that maneuver. Bran gasped and loosed his hold. Half stunned, he dropped to the floor directly behind the mule. It took Old Pizen only a second to regain his balance. Then the mighty haunches flexed. Heels drew back for that terrific kick which no other creature can match. Only man's invention of gunpowder and some of his great machinery such as triphammers and piledrivers surpass it.

Peter yelled so loudly in alarm he could not hear the shouts of the newly arrived MacTavish and the corporal from the doorway. He seized the bare second he had to act. A lightning dive, and he had grabbed Bran's limp body, thrust it aside and scrambled for safety.

Too late! Iron-shod heels hit him with a thud that brought groans of anguish from MacTavish and the corporal running to the rescue. One hoof grazed his skull; the other drove into his ribs, and he was flung clear across the stable aisle. His whole frame shuddered convulsively, then lay inert and still.

"The poor fool!" cried the corporal, bending over Peter sadly. "What'd he want to go and get himself killed for—just for a dog! Can't understand it."

"You wouldna," said MacTavish shortly. "Run for the surgeon. Quick, mon!"

The secret of the hidden staghound no longer could be kept. A full report of a possibly fatal accident to a soldier must be made. A board of officers would sit, and determine whether Private Shannon's injuries or his death were incurred in line of duty. A verdict to the contrary was virtually certain on the evidence to be given by the witnesses who had seen most of the incident. No military necessity could have caused the young trooper, lying in the post hospital still unconscious, to risk his life for a dog.

First of all, the presence of the dog would have to be explained—and that to General Custer even before the board convened. MacTavish sat in the stable and racked his brains. Beside him crouched Bran, already recovered, for he had been little hurt. A leash was fastened to his harness in readiness. Custer, the Scot well knew, would be sending for them both any minute.

Before MacTavish could work out his problem, the inevitable summons arrived.

The Dog-Tender-in-Chief found Custer just returned from an early ride on which the greater part of his pack had accompanied him as usual. Most of the dogs had dashed off to their breakfasts, but one fat and aging foxhound named Lucy Stone had taken position in front of him. She still was puffing; she seldom exerted herself any more, and on a march she generally asked for a lift in a wagon. Plainly she was regretting the run this morning, for as she sat in front of the General, she lifted beseeching eyes to him and held up a forepaw to display a cactus thorn sticking in the pad. If no human were near, the dogs could pull out thorns with their teeth, but every one of them knew they never asked Custer for help in vain.

Still in the saddle of a fine Kentucky thoroughbred, his favorite mount Vic, Custer looked down at the fat hound. As always with his dogs, he began talking to her, putting in her mouth the words she would have spoken if she had the gift of speech.

"There sits Lucy Stone," he declared. "And she is saying: 'If you please, sir, since you chose to bring me into a land of bristling earth like this, will you please get down immediately and attend to my foot?' "

He swung down, and with a pair of tweezers in a knife he carried for the purpose, gently extracted the thorn. Lucy wagged her tail and waddled off, Custer telling her she was welcome.

Then he turned toward the orderly and his charge. Long and hard he stared at Bran. His expression softened as he took in the points of the fine animal. He fondled the staghound, and Bran responded politely. Then he accused suspiciously: "MacTavish, I've seen this hound before."

"The General has seen the like of him," MacTavish evaded, "but none better in all his pack." The Scot took a bold step. "It may be, sir, the General marks some resemblance to the puir sick pup I put out of the way." (Well, he *had* put him out of the way—in a way.)

"Where's the likeness to this strong one? Maida's litter was sandy red. This one's yellow." Custer, still skeptical, demanded: "Whose dog is he?"

Scotty had been thinking fast and furiously. "Whose dog, sir? That I wouldna want to tell, but with the accident to the lad in the hospital, I can nae longer keep it." On the spur of the moment he made a surprise gift to Peter. "The dog is his—his very ane."

The General looked flabbergasted, then indignant. "Mean to say that young trumpeter who kicked up such a fuss about wanting to rejoin the 4th Cavalry dared sneak a dog into the post?"

None of the guile and craftiness with which the Scot now spoke showed in his face. "Who would have said him nay in his auld regiment where he thought to go?" he asked. "Small wonder he's avairse to serving wi' the Seventh, feeling he must give up the fine young hound who has his heart."

Here was a serious flaw in MacTavish's plot, and he knew it. There was no telling whether the young soldier in the hospital would agree to having a staghound suddenly foisted on him as his own—even if the animal were the one he had saved. And should he happen to be willing, would he be quick enough to play up to MacTavish's lead, if ownership had to be established in General Custer's presence? Well, those chances would have to be taken; and the Scot continued spinning his yarn:

"Ay, now the General canna mistake the lad's reason for wanting to leave the regiment. How could he ken that a staghound—in particular so bonnie a one as this—could nowhere find a warmer welcome than in the Seventh?"

Suspicion was replaced on Custer's face by a rare expression of indecision. MacTavish hammered in still more of the overwhelming posers which had his commanding officer backed into a corner.

"If Private Shannon lives, might the General not make him his ane trumpeter to follow him on his rides and hunts?" the orderly resumed. "And then wouldna Bran here run wi' the General's hounds?"

"MacTavish, you're a scheming scoundrel!" Custer burst out laughing.

"Nae, sir," Scotty answered, all innocence.

Custer said reflectively: "That young soldier must be devoted to his dog when he takes what he took from Old Pizen's heels for this pup's sake."

" 'Greater love hath nae mon,' sir," quoted the Scot solemnly.

Nor for some days could the surgeon feel assured that Peter Shannon would recover. Gradually the effects of the concussion sustained by the young trooper wore away, and broken bones began to knit. By a twist of his body as he snatched Bran aside, Peter had escaped the full force of the mule's kick; otherwise he would have paid a far more severe penalty than three cracked ribs and a gashed scalp.

Although there were few comforts in the hospital of a small frontier post, Peter was well aware that he was

lucky to have been gravely injured in garrison and not in the field. Too often on campaigns no surgeon was present. A soldier, wounded or injured, could count on nothing more than crude first-aid from an officer or fellow-troopers. Many a time the best he could do was tear off a strip from his dirty shirt, bind up his wound and hope to obtain proper treatment before gangrene set in. Peter had seen occasions in the Fourth when badly wounded men were tied in their saddles to ride long, agonizing miles. A hard-jolting ambulance was a comparative luxury, one seldom enjoyed by fast-moving cavalry who could not be delayed by wagons. No man, if it possibly could be avoided, ever was left to the mercies of the Indians while a spark of life remained in him.

Mrs. Custer and other Army women, along with the kindly Eliza, helped the none-too-capable hospital orderlies nurse Peter toward health. Chaplain O'Neill came often to sit with him. Praising Peter's brave rescue of the staghound, the chaplain drew on his lore of dogs to entertain the convalescent.

"It's usually the other way around, Shannon, with the dog saving a man," he observed. "There's St. Roch, for instance. He was a holy man who tended the sick in medieval times when the plague raged through Europe. One day he was himself stricken and lay alone and helpless in a forest. A dog found him, and every day brought him a loaf of bread in its mouth. You can see St. Roch's image in many a European shrine still, with the faithful hound, the loaf in its mouth, crouched at his side. You'll also find dogs represented lying at the feet of other saints, especially St. Bernard."

"I've read of St. Bernard dogs," Peter said.

"Marvelous animals," the chaplain declared. "I saw something of them when I was a young man studying abroad and made a trip up to the Great St. Bernard pass in the Alps. They say the number of human lives those dogs have saved runs into the thousands."

"One of them was named Barry, I remember."

"Yes, he was the most celebrated of them all. The dogs were called 'Barry hounds' after him before they were known as St. Bernards. Barry alone rescued forty people. There's a legend that the forty-first person he tried to save killed him, mistaking him for a wolf; but the truth is he lived to a ripe old age and was painlessly put to sleep—about 1814, I think it was. I saw him, mounted by a taxidermist, in a museum in Berne, Switzerland. Now this staghound of yours, Shannon—"

"He's not mine, Padre. I never saw him before that day in tbe stable."

"Then he belongs to MacTavish, I suppose," Chaplain O'Neill guessed. "But since he's not yours, then far greater credit is due you for putting your life in jeopardy that day to save him, no more than a strange dog to you."

The Chaplain rose and stood beside Peter's cot. Smiling down at the prostrate young soldier, he said:

"I've told you that the account between man and his friend the dog is heavily in the dog's favor. You have helped to cancel some of that debt. God's blessing on you, my son."

Custer's admiration had been aroused by Peter's courageous act in saving the dog. His fondness for dogs had been played upon with infinite skill by MacTavish. But the General was too old a hand not to know the wiles of soldiers and to swallow their stories whole, however glibly told. He was not altogether satisfied. He would investigate further.

As Peter lay in his cot, he felt a stir run through the ward. The regimental commander was paying a visit, and behind him marched his orderly, leading a dog. Peter's gaze warmed. It was the dog he had rescued that day.

As if he were making a routine inspection, General Custer walked down the room, asking patients how they



Peter thrust Bran aside, scrambled for safety. Too late!

were getting on. He planned to reach Peter's bed last. Then he would see whether the dog greeted his "master" or whether he even noticed him.

But the canny MacTavish had thought ahead to that one. Waiting until Custer was engaged in conversation with a patient, the Scot hurried the dog by him straight to Peter's cot.

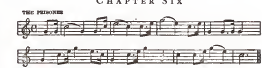
"Now, Bran," he whispered, "here he is—the lad that saved you. Up wi' you and thank him!" He tugged up on the leash.

He need not have taken all his precautions. Peter had stretched out a hand weakly toward the dog and called to him. Bran knew him at once. Plainly he remembered. The staghound, already standing as high as the low Army cot, rose on his hindlegs and put his forepaws on the blanket. Not effusively but with the dignity of his kind, he acknowledged the debt of life he owed this man. He licked the hand that reached around his shoulders.

Moisture shone in Custer's eyes. He spoke the words the dog seemed to be trying to utter.

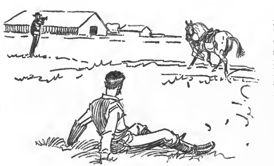
"Soldier," he told Peter, "he's saying, 'Master, you saved my life, and I'll guard yours with mine as long as we both shall live.' "

Chapter Six



Most dogs, symbols of loyalty, will not lightly transfer their allegiance from one master to another. Some never will. There are tales of dogs which have taken post on the grave of an owner, and refusing all food, lain there until they followed him into the hereafter. But the great majority, after a period of bewilderment and mourning, will attach their affections anew. Their need of human companionship is too great to be long denied. That bond, formed thousands of years ago when the first lonely wild puppy crept out of the shadows of a forest and joined a fur-clad man by his fire, holds fast still.

MacTavish realized that he must now break the tie between himself and the staghound, hard though it came, and let Peter become Bran's master in fact. Persuading Peter to accept the dog as his own had not been difficult. Not only was the young soldier eager to protect a comrade in the ranks from the certain wrath of Custer if the



A scornful steed would toss off the rookie and nonchalantly obey every signal.

General discovered the trick that had been played on him; Peter was proud to possess so fine an animal. But MacTavish understood that only by absenting himself from the scene for some time could the transfer of Bran's allegiance to his new owner be successfully accomplished. Accordingly, he took a furlough to visit his sister in Canada, while Burkman, the orderly in charge of Custer's horses, assumed care of the pack also. The Scot waited until Peter was discharged from the hospital, then turned Bran over to him and left the post.

Bran greeted his new master, wagging his tail with friendly reserve. Later he accepted his food from him. Although for days the dog was sad, and his eyes roamed everywhere in search of the Scot, he followed the young soldier who made much of him.

The short remainder of Peter's company punishment was remitted, and he was detailed as trumpeter. Bran accompanied him to the outskirts of the post whither trumpeters were banished for practice to spare the ears of the rest of the garrison. While in the Fourth Cavalry Peter had been expert, but he had not touched the instrument since. As he began to blow again, the first few calls rippled off in fine style—but thereafter he was not able to sound anything without a series of discordant blasts and *whooshes.* Like every horn-player, he must toughen his lips, and that was no easy task. Bran stayed with him through the days of that process when every other creature shunned the vicinity. The dog sat on his haunches and emitted only a few doleful howls when the trumpeter's attempts to reach G ended in dismal bleats and wails which sounded like the shrieking of a lost soul; nor could his master blame the staghound.

As a trumpeter, Peter found that the color of the mount assigned him was predetermined. In accordance with an old cavalry tradition, Custer mounted his field music and band on grays and whites. Peter drew an off-shade white, an aging but amiable animal named Humpty. Humpty was slow and short-coupled; when he cantered, he rocked like a hobby-horse. Peter's cavalryman's heart was disgusted. No greater contrast to the fast black Morgan, Justin, his mount in the Fourth, could be imagined; but privates in the Army, like beggars, can't be choosers.

SLOWLY but reluctantly Peter began to fit himself perforce into the Seventh. It was, as the recruit depot corporal had assured him, a good outfit. Custer had given it pride in itself, *esprit de corps.* But Peter was quick to learn through the enlisted men's grapevine that in one vital respect it was a house divided.

There was never a more dashing commander in the Army than George Armstrong Custer. *Beau sabreur,* hard-riding cavalryman, he seemed cast in the mold of the great leaders of horse of all time. Yet you either hated him or you loved him—there was no middle ground. Peter Shannon thus far could not decide to which camp he belonged. Stern in enforcing discipline, Custer was sometimes impatient, sometimes actually insubordinate under it himself. There had been occasions in the last war when he disobeyed orders; and once not long ago a court-martial had reprimanded him and suspended him from command and pay for having left his troops on an Indian campaign. When he heard that there had been an outbreak of the dreaded cholera at the post where he had left his wife, he had turned over the column to another officer and ridden back hard and fast with a small escort, never resting till he learned Mrs. Custer was well.

"Who is not for me is against me," might have stood as the motto of the Seventh's commanding officer. Suspicions of favoritism were inevitable in a regiment, one of whose companies was commanded by Custer's brother-in-law, Lieutenant Calhoun, and another by his brother, gallant Tom Custer, who had won two Medals of Honor fighting for the Union. Two other Custer relatives would soon join in civilian capacities. And the regiment, like others, knew the perennial cleavage between the West Pointers, headed by Custer, and officers who had not attended the Military Academy.

In barracks Peter heard the story of a still-smoldering scandal which had almost rent the regiment asunder.

At the Battle of the Washita, Custer had struck a big Cheyenne camp at dawn in the dead of winter. When a trumpeter blew the charge, the three columns into which he had divided his troops thundered down on the Indian village at a headlong gallop through the snow.

"How that wind-jammer got off that call is more'n I can figure," a bandsman told Peter. "Criminy, it was cold! Hanged if Old Curley didn't order the band to play 'em into action like always. Man, we got off just two bars of *Garryowen* when our breaths froze solid in our instruments, and we couldn't blow another note."

"But it was a hot fight, I tell you," a sharpshooter took up the story. "Braves came boiling out of the wigwams shooting. Cap'n Hamilton, he got it straight through the heart. We rid right over them Injuns. Some squaws and kids got killed by accidunt. I shot one a-purpose and I won't never regret it. She was standing over a little white boy they'd captured, with her knife up. My bullet got her dead to rights, but she still had the strength to slash the poor young-un's stomach open."

A THIRD trooper related: "I just missed following Major Elliott, and that's all the reason I'm still here. Off gallops the Major with Sergeant-Major Kennedy and thirteen men. I can still hear him shouting, 'Here goes for a brevet or a coffin!' 'Twas coffins they all got—or rather holes in the ground. There was heap more Injuns down the valley. They came whooping up and smothered the bunch with Elliott. We found what was left of 'em later in a clump of tall grass. The rest of us were hard pressed for a while. Sure was a near thing when we began to run out of ammunition. Reckon I'll never forget the sight of Lieutenant Bell bringing the wagons straight through the Indians. Those galloping mules were laying right down to the ground like jack-rabbits, and the wagons swaying all over the place. When they got to us with the ammunition, tar on the wheels was blazing up from the friction."

"What we did to them Injuns was plenty," the bandsman resumed. "Seems like they ain't got over it yet. But Custer was smart to get us out of there with our scalps on. When we was clear and our instruments thawed out, what you think we played? *'Ain't I Glad to Get Out of the Wilderness.'* And was we!"

The old argument raged heatedly again. Had Custer abandoned Elliott to his fate? Some insisted that he had, since he had heard the sound of distant firing and

made no move toward rescue. But, others argued, Custer had his hands full. If Elliott had run for it when he saw a mass of tribesmen riding down on his small detachment, instead of standing and fighting, he could have escaped. And all agreed the General had done first-rate in extricating his command from the clutches of the several thousand Indians in lower villages by the feint of an attack and then a rapid countermarch of retreat.

"Some of the officers say Old Curley let Elliott and the rest get scuppered when he could have saved 'em easy," the trooper informed Peter. "Specially Colonel Benteen. He's Cap'n of 'H' Company, my outfit, and acting battalion commander. He's all right to soldier under, Benteen is. You've seen him. Heavy-set feller with a red face and white hair. Looks kind of like Santy Claus. Well, Benteen up and writes a letter burning up the General for letting Elliott down. It gets in the papers. Man, does that start a ruckus! Custer has 'Officers' Call' sounded. He tells the lot of 'em he's going to horsewhip the feller who wrote that letter soon as he finds out who it is, and he gives his boots a mean cut with the whip he always carries—just for a sample. Old Benteen looks him up and down, shifts his pistol holster around to front of his belt handy-like and says: 'All right, General, start your horsewhipping now. I wrote it.' Old Curley backs down and gives 'em dismiss."

"Custer backed down!" cried Peter in amazement.

"For once in his life. Hanged if I know what else he could do."

Others chimed in. "It wasn't exactly what you'd call the beginning of a beautiful friendship. . . . Them two hates each other's innards."

Well, Peter reflected, there were bound to be clashes of personalities and interests in any regiment, just as in any civilian organization. The tight discipline of the Army and the narrow confines of a post simply pointed them up. The Seventh had deserter trouble, too. There were the "snowbirds," men who enlisted in the fall to secure food and shelter for the winter, then cleared out at the first sign of spring. Ever since gold had been struck in the Black Hills, soldiers from every regiment in the West had been thumbing their noses at the poor pay and hardships of the Army and taking off to try their luck digging yellow wealth from the ground. That the Seventh should suffer from such desertions was natural, for when the gold rush began, and prospectors and settlers flooded into the Hills, violating the treaties reserving those lands to the Sioux, it had been Custer and his regiment who were ordered out to protect the intruders. Envious troopers watched civilians strike it rich.

Ever since the gold discovery, it was easy to guess where soldiers were heading when they deserted from the Seventh. Consequently when the report was made one morning that there had been a guardhouse break during the night, the General dispatched a pursuing detachment in the direction of the Black Hills.

He barked sharp orders at Godfrey, officer of the guard. "Get after them fast. They've got a good head-start. And bring them back—dead or alive!"

The lieutenant saluted and dashed for the stables on the double. As his sergeant began mounting a detachment, the officer shouted at Peter.

"You too. Saddle up. I need a trumpeter."

PETER found it good to be in the saddle and out on the plains again, and there was tingling zest in a man-hunt. He would have much preferred this one had been an Indian chase. There was a certain grim unpleasantness about going after deserters—like a policeman having to arrest old neighbors.

Riding close behind Lieutenant Godfrey, Peter heard him outlining the situation to the sergeant.

"Seven of them," the officer was saying. "There's a couple of horses missing, so two of the deserters are mounted. Maybe more—they may have stolen other animals from a ranch or stage station. If they did, we'll never catch 'em. Our only chance is that some are still footing it. They'll hold back the mounted men if they're sticking together."

The officer turned in his saddle to glance to the rear. "What's that?" he demanded. A small dust-cloud was rapidly overtaking them. "Confound it, a dog! Must be one of the General's. Never knew 'em to follow anybody but him before. Sergeant, send a trooper to ride that dog off and get him started home."

"I'll go, sir," Peter offered. "Sorry, but I'm afraid that's my dog, not the General's. He's not very well trained yet."

Bran came bounding up and leaped joyously toward his master's saddle.

"Send him back," the lieutenant ordered curtly.

"I told you to *stay*," Peter shouted sternly down at the hound. "Back you go now. Go *home*."

Bran, deflated and contrite, turned, his flaunting tail lowered to half-mast. Looking apologetically yet half-hopefully over his shoulder, he slunk away from the column. But when it began to draw off, the dog could not resist and came loping up again. The age-old, oft-repeated struggle between a man and the dog he is trying to send home was played through. Persuasions were as futile as angry scoldings and chases. Finally Lieutenant Godfrey said: "Save your horse, Shannon. Let the dog come along. Might turn out to be some help."

LATE that day Bran, who had been running off to one flank, came racing back to Peter. The dog kept uttering short, low barks until he caught his master's attention.

"Sir, my dog smells something off there," Peter reported to Godfrey. "May be only stray calf or a coyote, but it's something alive."

"Can't see a thing, but it might be out of sight down in a buffalo wallow," Godfrey declared. "Ride over and take a look."

Bran led the way, quickly outdistancing Humpty. Peter saw the dog slow, then halt and stalk forward. But investigations were brought to an abrupt halt. Smoke puffed from the edge of the wallow, and a bullet pinged past Peter's head. He wheeled Humpty and spurred back.

The men hidden in the wallow had made a break for it and were a quarter-mile distant before the detachment could be gathered in for pursuit. Three of the fugitives were seen to be mounted, the rest running beside them, holding to stirrup leathers. They were the deserters, plus an extra man, evidently a plainsman they had picked up as guide.

Lieutenant Godfrey called to Peter: "Trumpeter, sound 'Recall.' "

The deserters paid no attention to the clear notes floating across the prairie.

"Blow 'Halt.' "

The two imperative notes only seemed to hasten the pace of the pursued.

"All right, Sergeant." The officer needed to say no more. The veteran non-com had handled deserters before and was taking no chances. Once, bringing in a tough character caught going over the hill, he had stopped at a hash-house in town for a meal. Suddenly the man flung a handful of red pepper straight in his eyes. Blinded and in agony though he was, the sergeant had groped his way out of the door, fired toward the sound of deserter's footfalls and dropped him. Now he barked sharp orders. Carbines were unslung; breeches clicked open for cartridges, snapped shut. Butts came to rest on right thighs as left hands gathered reins. Carbines at the ready, the detachment took up the trot.

Spurts of smoke from up ahead. The deserters were desperate enough to fight. Godfrey coolly dismounted

his men and ordered the horses back. Every fourth trooper, the horse-holder, linked the bridles of three horses to his own, remounted and trotted to the rear out of range. Men on the line were deployed and commenced firing at will. Prone or kneeling, they picked their targets, and the carbines cracked steadily. Godfrey, shooting also, called out, waved his arm, and the skirmish line moved forward in a rush. They had the range now. One of the deserters was hit, then a second. A horse dropped. The starch went out of them, and a white rag waved from their midst.

Peter, once "cease firing" had been given, put down his carbine to grasp Bran's collar. The dog had crouched beside him during the fight, but now was becoming difficult to restrain. Preoccupied with him, Peter only half heard Godfrey examining the plainsman found with the deserters. The officer was telling him he kept bad company.

"How'd I know?" the man demanded. "Their story was they'd served their time and been discharged. We met up, and they hired me to guide 'em."

"Sounds a bit too pat. Where were you heading?"

"That's my business."

"Where you were taking these men is my business. You better speak up, or I'll have to put you under arrest."

The two men, both still mounted, stared each other in the eye. The plainsman snapped back insolently: "Arrest me and see what happens to you. Heard of false arrest, ain't you? You got nothing ag'in' me. Outa my way! I'm ridin'!"

"Wait. Hid in the wallow with these deserters, didn't you? What'd you think they were hiding for? If they were time-up men, all they had to do was show me their papers. Stuck along with them when they ran, and then tried to shoot their way out, didn't you?"

"Sure I did." The other sneered. "One ag'in' seven, wasn't I? Reckon anybody'd have sense enough to shut up and play poker then."

Godfrey reluctantly reined back. "Guess I can't hold you," he acknowledged. The plainsman, nonchalantly dismounting to tighten his cinch, flung back: "Naw, you can't—not you nor any other shavetail still wet behind the ears."

Peter grinned to himself. He didn't like the fellow's voice, and he probably was a bad *hombre,* but he had made a neat job of facing down the lieutenant. The trumpeter, still holding Bran, moved over for a better look.

There was something familiar about the set of those shoulders. If they'd been covered by Army blue instead of buckskin— The plainsman turned toward Peter full face. His reddish beard was not disguise enough. Peter knew those hard eyes, those coarsely handsome features, the small, weak mouth under the mustache. You remembered a man who had tried to kill you. It was—no doubt of it—his old enemy Rick, former corporal in the 4th Cavalry, and carried on its rolls as a deserter.

Lieutenant Godfrey, looking crestfallen, had dismounted and was ordering: "Sergeant, have those seven deserters tied up."

"Make it eight," Peter shouted. "That fellow's a deserter from the Fourth!"
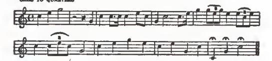
Things happened so fast Peter could only sense them at the moment, and had to reconstruct them afterward.

Recognizing Peter, a malevolent glare flashed in Rick's eyes. The deserter knew he would not be able to talk his way out of this one. A leap, and he was in his saddle—the only man mounted in the group. Soldiers scrambled for weapons, out of reach or emptied in the recent fight, or dashed for horses. Rick squandered two precious seconds of hatred on Peter. He reached for his pistol, forgetting he had been disarmed when he was taken prisoner. Next he gathered his mount to ride the trumpeter down.

Bran exploded a menacing growl, rising on his hindlegs and tugging madly against the collar his master still held. Rick took one look at the furious dog and swung his horse to one side. The animal plunged against the officer's mount and bowled it over. Rick rode straight through the horse-holders, making them drop reins and scattering their charges. Random shots fired after him went wild and Peter watched the fleeing figure grow small in the distance.

What was done was done. Rick, branded as a deserter both in the Southwest and now in Dakota Territory, would make himself exceedingly scarce. Like Indians of the Plains tribes, defeated on the warpath, he would ride north to safety over the Border. Odds were a hundred to one that Peter ever would face his Fourth Cavalry enemy again.

Chapter Seven



The veteran cavalry horses, many with five years of service and some with ten or more, knew the trumpet calls as well as or better than their riders. Of their own accord, grazing horses ambled back to stables when they heard "Recall" sounded. During drill some scornful steed, bored with the rookie bumping about on his back, would toss him off, and riderless, nonchalantly obey every signal sounded.

Dogs on the post were equally musical. As quickly as a master's whistle, they recognized various trumpet calls. Favorites, of course, were "Mess Call" and the flourishes blown by the Custer brothers on hunting horns. Yet the dogs seemed to be familiar also with all the calls of the long succession that timed the regiment's day from First Call for reveille through to Taps. Peter claimed that when he was trumpeter of the guard, Bran reminded him when to sound off.

But there was one call the young staghound had not yet answered—the call of the pack. At first he had been kept apart through necessity, because he was being hidden. Later Peter had segregated him to make sure that nothing distracted Bran from knowing him as his master. But the time was at hand when Bran must respond to a canine "Call to Quarters."

Late one afternoon while his master was on duty, Bran slipped away and trotted over to Officers' Row. The pack, just fed by Burkman, was lolling in contented ease behind General Custer's quarters. Lazy old Lucy Stone was dozing. Bran's mother Maida was asleep inside on her rug. The pointer Ginnie, Eliza's favorite, thumped her tail as she dreamed. Byron, the lordly greyhound, lay couchant, as if posing for an heraldic crest. Other greyhounds and foxhounds—Brandy, Rattler, Jupiter, Sultan, and Tyler—napped or scratched. Turk, Tom Custer's stubby white bulldog, was about to saunter off and join his boon companion Phil Sheridan, one of George Custer's chargers, named after the famous general who had been Old Curley's beloved leader in the war with the South and now commanded in the West.

In dignified repose the staghounds gazed off into the distance—Tuck, Custer's particular pet, Blucher, Lady and various youngsters. Their ears pricked up, and they swung their heads to watch the door. Their fellow, the cream-colored Cardigan, was making an undignified exit

from the house, impelled by a vigorous push from Eliza's broom.

"Pesky, sassy ol' houn'!" the cook scolded. "Big ol' good-for-nothin', you won't never learn. Thinks you is a lapdog, does you? All the time climbin' up on po' Miss Libby's lap, and you twice the size she is."

Cardigan sailed off the stoop, with the most comically sheepish expression imaginable. He half lit on one of the other dogs but there was no other resentment than a low growl, for Cardigan still bore the scars of a recent fight in which he had given a good account of himself.

It was at this moment that Bran approached the pack.

UNCERTAIN of his welcome, Bran advanced slowly, his tail wagging a little in a deferential and ingratiating manner. Yet there was nothing cringing about him; he was a dog of consequence and he knew it. He had won a name with the regiment on the deserter chase. The Seventh, not his master alone, was proud of him, and officers and enlisted men spoke to him and patted him.

But his reception by the pack was another matter. At once he sensed that he was confronted by their traditional unfriendliness toward a newcomer. Most of the dogs rose and bristled. It took courage to go ahead. Bran's walk slowed still more, and he stalked forward on stiff legs. It was like the new boy coming to school for the first time. Naturally it was toward the staghounds he made his overtures. The older hounds remained aloof—not so one of the younger ones, one of Bran's own brothers. No human being could have told whether they knew their relationship. If they did, brothers, canine or human, can be quarrelsome.

The one-time weakling of the litter was now closely matched in size and strength with this brother named Lufra. Rumbling deep in their throats, the two stood muzzle to muzzle and traded insults. Suddenly Lufra emitted a ferocious growl and reared up on his hindlegs. Bran rose to meet him. After the manner of staghounds in combat, they grappled like wrestlers. The fight was on.

The tumult, with all the pack joining in, barking and yipping, reverberated along the Row. Windows opened, and back doors framed spectators. Prisoners policing up the post found work which demanded their immediate presence in the vicinity and hurried over, willingly accompanied by their guards. Women called out pleas to stop the fight, but nobody seemed to know how to go about it. Neither General or Mrs. Custer, who had gone for a walk, was home; nor was any officer in sight.

Bran and Lufra tangled in a mêlée of tawny yellow and reddish hide. As excitement infected the pack, a large foxhound jostled Turk. Instantly the white bulldog leaped for his throat, and a second battle was joined.

Turk clamped on his grip, that deadly hold for which the bulldog was bred and trained and named. For seven hundred years his breed had used it in the cruel English "sport" of bull-baiting, fastening it on the nose of a bull—breathing easily through their own snubbed noses—hanging on no matter how wildly they were swung about—at last dragging their mighty adversaries to the ground. Turk's teeth inched in farther along the neck of the frantic foxhound, slowly strangling him.

An officer, Tom Custer, came running up. He seized his bulldog's hindlegs and tried to pull him off. Turk held on the tighter. Only when his master grabbed a carbine from a guard, slipped the barrel under Turk's collar and twisted it, did the choked dog release the gurgling foxhound.

Meanwhile the young staghounds stood clawing and tearing at each other. Neither was able to gain any advantage. Blood dripped from their jowls and from deep gashes in their shoulders. This fratricidal strife would end only in crippling wounds or death, for the tenacity of the staghound is no less than the bulldog's. Back and forth they wrestled, towering on their hindlegs nearly as high as a man. Soon one of these splendid animals must die. Captain Custer was busy with the other fight. No soldier was willing to risk a bite from those slavering jaws.

Civilization and mercy were sloughed off as the staghounds' conflict neared its climax. Entreaties screamed by women from the windows of quarters went unheeded. Watchers hoarsely cheered the combatants on.

"Go git him! Chaw him apart! Five dollars on the red un!" .... "Take you!"

Staghounds bark sparingly. Except for rasping growls, deep in their throats, the two fought in silence. Now Bran made mighty thrusts forward with all the power of his haunches. Gradually the other dog was borne back. In a moment they would go down, with Bran on top, giving and taking terrible wounds till the finish.

A rush, and two blue-clad figures pushed between the combatants. Peter and MacTavish, returned from furlough, had arrived only just in time. Each man took bites on hands and arms from the infuriated hounds, but they succeeded in separating them. Stern commands sent the two fighters crouching to earth, panting.

The crowd had melted hastily away. Peter and MacTavish began washing and salving the dogs' wounds after Eliza had helped them attend to their own bites. Now that hostilities were over, the staghounds paid no further attention to each other. The Scot grinned and remarked:

"Do ye ken Bobbie Burns, young Shannon, the grandest poet in Scotland or the world?"

"Yes, some of him. 'Tam o' Shanter' and 'Auld Lang Syne.' "

"I'm minded now of 'The Twa Dogs.' " Scotty quoted:

> *"When up they gat, an' shook their lugs,*
> *Rejoic'd they were na* men *but* dogs;
> *An' each took aff his several way,*
> *Resolv'd to meet some ither day."*

" 'Tis so wi' Bran and Lufra," he continued. "They're na like men who have fought to kill. They'll bear nae grudge, these twa. Most dogs willna—'tis only the few that fight on sight whenever they meet."

"Does look like there's no hard feelings." Peter stroked his dog's head. "Bran," he ordered, "there'll be no more scrapping. You've fought your way into the pack. You belong now, old boy."

CHAPTER EIGHT

MAIL CALL

AT sunrise and sunset the old fieldpiece on the parade-ground of Fort Abraham Lincoln boomed its daily salute to the Stars and Stripes, hoisted up the flagstaff to unfurl in the prairie breeze, or lowered for the night into the waiting arms of a color sergeant. As acrid fumes curled from the gun's vent, Peter thought: "That's the only powder I've smelled, except for the deserter chase, since I've been back in the Army."

But unmistakable signs pointed to action. Sooner or later the Seventh must take the field against the Sioux and Cheyennes whose young braves were jumping their reservations more and more frequently to gallop off on raids. Charred ruins of cabins, and the scalped and mutilated bodies of settlers, men, and women and children, marked their path. In a few weeks the savages would return to the reservation, all innocence, to draw their rations of Government beef and flour and demand more ammunition for their repeating rifles "for hunting."

Occasionally detachments of blue-clad troopers were sent to round up the raiders and herd them back, and

sometimes they accomplished their mission. As often, the redskins escaped over the Canadian border where they could not be followed, only to come whooping back again at will. It was a sorry state of affairs which could not be allowed to continue. Settlers, paying even less regard to treaties than the Indians, were demanding that the Government furnish protection, and the Army would be ordered to strike. Not much longer would small punitive expeditions hold in check the fighting Cheyennes or the fierce warriors of the Sioux nation, for years tyrants over the lesser plains tribes. From Washington would come orders mustering a sizable force to crush the Indian menace once and for all. And in that force the Seventh Cavalry surely would ride.

Preparing for the reckoning to come, Custer drilled his regiment mercilessly. Under Colonel Cooke, forty picked sharpshooters, excused from guard and fatigue details, trained the less accurate shots on the target range. More recruits and remounts arrived.

Peter, although Custer's taunt about transferring from the Seventh with a campaign ahead still rankled, had written his friend Major Lindsay, adjutant of the Fourth Cavalry, asking him to put in for him. Very probably the Fourth had plenty of fighting in prospect too. He could not understand why he had not yet received an answer, nor why the Major's daughter Sally Ann had not written him for weeks. It might be that her letters, forwarded from the East, had gone astray, but it was more likely she was preoccupied with all her officer beaux.

But one day his face was red when he responded to Mail Call. With a grin and considerable ribbing, the mail orderly dealt him out a missive in a familiar rounded handwriting, postmarked from an Army garrison in New Mexico. He ducked behind barracks to read it in private, while Bran sat on his haunches and regarded his master fondly. It read:

Peter dear: How perfectly marvelous *you're back in the Service!!!! Honestly, I* knew *you couldn't stay out for long.*

First thing, I ran right over to stables to tell Justin about it. Remember, you told him you'd be back. Pete, cross my heart I vow he understood!! *He put his soft nose against my cheek and nickered. He sends his love, too.*

Peter could not contain his emotion. So she hadn't changed after all! Eagerly he read ahead, half skipping an irrelevant and irritating paragraph about goings-on at the post. Sally Ann's pen flowed on:

When I rushed over to Headquarters to tell Dad you'd re-upped, it was no news to him. There was a letter from you on his desk, military as anything, saying the Seventh Cavalry had snagged you in spite of your putting in for us, and you simply had to *get back to the Old Fourth. Pete, if you didn't want to, I'd* never forgive you!!!!



This fratricidal strife would end only in death.

But listen, Peter, the Seventh is a good outfit too. General Custer is simply wonderful, *and Mrs. Custer is so sweet. Now just stand fast and hold your horse awhile, soldier, and see how things work out. You know as well as I do it doesn't do a trooper any good to kick up a big fuss with the C.O., and I do so want to see you win a commission from the ranks.*

So what do you think I've done? I practically ordered *Daddy to put your application for transfer down under all the papers in his basket!*

So, Peter, if you don't hear anything for a while, you'll know why.

Write soon to your best girl (I hope I still am!!!!!!)

Sally Ann.

P.S. This letter sounds like a schoolgirl's, and I'm a grown-up young lady, but I am *so glad you're back in the Army.*

Peter dropped the letter with an expression of such baffled bewilderment that Bran gave a little moan of sympathy. Angry resentment surged up in him. The nerve of the girl! What was she getting at anyway? So she wanted him to stay here and win a commission. Didn't she care for him unless he wore epaulettes?

Write her? Not he! What he would write would be another letter to Major Lindsay requesting immediate favorable action on his transfer to the Fourth.

When you were down in the depths of the blues and your thoughts tangled into knots, hard work was the best anodyne. Peter, knowing that, flung himself into the Seventh's preparations. His lips had toughened up, and Chief Trumpeter Hardy, who had ridden behind Custer through the War Between the States, praised his new man's trumpeting, and stationed him in the front ranks when the field music was massed. As Colonel Cooke had observed, martial music was dear to Custer's heart and he used it with telling effect in garrison and field. Chief Musician Felix Vinatori, with the warm blood of Italy in his veins, led the band with fire and *bravura*. His sixteen bandsmen, mostly German, responded with ringing harmonies. Ever memorable to Peter was the day he first passed in review with the regiment while the band blared the rollicking strains of the march the Seventh had adopted as its own, "Garryowen."

That march, its lively six-eight tempo ideal for cavalry, had been suggested by Captain Myles Keogh, one of the company commanders. Keogh, once a Papal Zouave and a veteran of hard fighting in Africa and our own War Between the States, had learned it in his native Ireland from his father, member of a Royal Irish Lancer regiment. On paydays the Lancers consorted at Owen's Garden, a tavern for which their song was named, to roar out its chorus over foaming tankards of ale.

Let Bacchus' sons be not dismayed,
But join with me each jovial blade;
Come booze and sing, and lend your aid,
To help me with the chorus.

Chorus

Instead of Spa we'll drink down ale,
And pay the reck'ning on the nail;
No man for debt shall go to jail
From Garryowen in glory. . . .

We are the boys that take delight in
Smashing the Limerick lights when lighting,
Through the streets like sporters fighting
And tearing all before us.

Our hearts so stout have got us fame,
For soon 'tis known from whence we came;
Where'er we go they dread the name
Of Garryowen in glory.

Yet Peter, passing in review to "Garryowen," seldom thought of its words. He glanced over at Captain Keogh, riding his stocky bay charger Comanche at the head of his company. As the band played, Peter was caught up by the stirring panoply of the march past.

Gallant in Army blue, the companies sat erect in the saddles of their matched mounts, following the national and regimental standards, majestically outflung, and the fluttering cavalry guidons of red and white. Good men and nondescripts, war veterans and raw recruits. A former brigadier general of volunteers in rank beside a lad fresh from the farm. Scores of troopers who once had worn the gray of the Confederacy. Some of these had been captured while the War Between the States still was in progress and released from Northern prisons to fight the Indian tribes, with the promise they would not serve against the South. They were called "galvanized Yankees," because iron, when galvanized, changes color as they did the hue of their uniforms.

Custer, five loops of gold braid glistening on his sleeves, took the salutes. Past him with his squadron rode swarthy, saturnine Major Reno, inexperienced in Indian-fighting, but the bearer of three brevets for gallantry in action in '61-'65. Benteen, sweeping up his saber and commanding, "Eyes right," returned the General's narrowed gaze with a scowl. On with their companies came Tom Custer, grinning at his brother; Captain Yates, and young Lieutenant Trelford, also blond and handsome. Captain Smith managed his reins in spite of a crippled left arm. Keogh swung by, and two other former Papal Zouave officers, Nowlan and De Rudio. Yonder stood out the bronzed aquiline features of Lieutenant Donald McIntosh, half Indian, half Scot. There rode merry Benny Hodgson, Varnum, his boon companion, and other able young West Pointers, Godfrey and Hare, who one day would don General's stars. That was Jack Sturgis, son of the Seventh's colonel—who was on detached duty, and to Custer's delight, never had appeared to assume command of the regiment.

As he watched—no mere spectator but a part of it all—Trumpeter Peter Shannon struggled against an unwelcome sensation: pride in a regiment he never had meant to call his own.

ONLY a few favored troopers could gain access to the Custer kitchen out of the many who tried. Eliza's cooking, which could completely disguise Army rations as savory dishes, was a potent lure indeed.

MacTavish and Burkman, as Custer's orderlies, were privileged characters in the kitchen. And Peter, since the day he broke up Bran's fight, had often returned to the Custer quarters, knowing he would find his dog in the pack's company in that vicinity. But Peter, like many others, knew the Custer kitchen and its culinary charms. On several occasions the General had sent Peter in to get a meal after a late detail had made him miss regular mess.

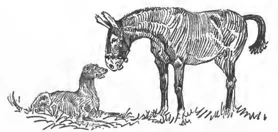
Craving more of the same Peter laid a plot, prompted by MacTavish. Dropping over for Bran after Retreat, the trumpeter found Eliza seated on the back-door steps, enjoying the fine spring evening.

"Eliza," he remarked casually after a greeting, "I often wondered how you happened to come to work for the General."

That, MacTavish had assured him, was the colored woman's favorite story. Once warmed by telling it, she would hand out everything on the stove to a good listener. If she did not rise to the bait this evening, it would be too bad for Peter who had gambled heavily on it by passing up mess.

Eliza looked a trifle suspicious but could not resist.

"Well, young sojer, it happen like this," she began. "It happen back in '63 down South with the fightin' goin' on all aroun'. All the darkies was excited over freedom, and I craved to see how it was. After the



Bran grew fast; not much longer could he be kept in Old Pizen's stall.

'Mancipation, everybody was a-shoutin' for liberty, and I wasn't goin' to stay home when the res' was goin'. Day I come to a Union camp there was lots of other darkies standin' roun'. Ginnel come up to me and ask my name, and I tol' him Eliza. Ginnel, he looks me up and down and ask would I like to come and cook fo' him. I looks *him* all over and sez: 'Reckon I would.' "

She had worked faithfully for the "Ginnel" ever since—under fire in the field, through dire hardship on the plains. Now she rose to go back into the house. "Miss Libby say dinner be late 'cause company's comin'. Things jes' sp'ilin' on the stove. Couldn't git nothin' anyway from the Commissary 'cept canned tomatoes and peaches. And beef—all the time beef. I declare I's et so much beef I 'xpects to grow horns and beller."

Peter laughed loudly in appreciation. "That's a good one, Eliza," he praised.

Eliza said: "Vittles jes' sp'ilin' on the stove. Young sojer, you got appetite enough for a bite while they's hot?"

The schemer and base flatterer thought he could manage. . . .

Peter had risen from the "bite" in repletion and was thanking Eliza profusely when wheels rattled out front. The late company was arriving. Peter heard General and Mrs. Custer's voices in happy greeting and responses in feminine tones. That would be one of the pretty girls from Monroe, Michigan, the Custers' home town—one of the belles they often invited for a visit to gladden the hearts of all the young officers. Evidently one of them was being gladdened already, for Peter recognized the voice of Lieutenant Trelford, who must have acted as the young lady's escort. The General's voice cut through.

"So she's practically engaged, is she, Libby? Hurrah! Then we won't have to order the officers to propose by platoons."

"I think they will anyway," came Mrs. Custer's answer.

"I," Trelford put in gallantly, "am first and foremost."

Peter smiled at the girl's gay laugh. As he moved toward the back door to depart, he caught her rejoinder: "No decision can be taken, Lieutenant, till I've gone out in the kitchen and asked the advice of my old friend Eliza."

Tread of light footsteps. Framed in the doorway like the lovely picture she was, stood Sally Ann.

NO wonder he had not recognized her voice. It held maturity, a deep-reaching thrill he had not known. In two years she had become a grown-up young lady. Her wide, hooped, brown traveling dress was caught up into a fetching bustle. A saucy little hat, adorned with feathers, perched forward at an angle on her chestnut curls, most of them swept back into a chignon confined in a snood. But the same clear, candid gaze looked out at Peter from her hazel eyes, and her little nose still was freckled and wrinkled a trifle across the bridge when she smiled.

"Peter!" she cried—then faintly: "Oh, Peter!"

He was sure she was coming straight into his arms, but she glanced at Eliza, and only ran forward to put both



Humpty skidded to a four-footed stop and pitched Peter off in a soaring arc.

her hands in his. They stood there speechless, gazing deep into each other's eyes.

Eliza, arms akimbo, watched beaming. "It's jes' about time," announced the cook. "I declare I was gittin' ready to leave this heah wilderness an' desert fo' good an' all. Ain't been no picnics, no church sociables, no buryin's—an' no weddin's. Now reckon mebbe Eliza stays."

Sally Ann blushed. She and Peter both began talking at once. Now didn't he see why she'd urged him to stand fast with the Seventh? . . . Yes, but why did girls like to make a fellow suffer for weeks? She ought to have written she was coming to visit the Custers. . . . Didn't men ever like a nice surprise, or wasn't she one? . . . "Gosh, Sally Ann, you're prettier than ever, and gosh, how I've missed you!"

The click of spurred boots interrupted them. Lieutenant Trelford stood watching them, a puzzled, a distinctly annoyed expression on his handsome features. Peter took in the tall, lithe figure in the dashing uniform, and knew the contrast with his own shorter stature and plain trooper's garb was no happy one. He snapped to rigid attention.

"Trumpeter," Trelford declared curtly, "the General says for you to take my mount back to stables and turn him over to my striker. And tell them at the junior officers' mess I won't be there. I'm staying to dinner."

"Very good, sir." As he left, Peter saw the Lieutenant offer his arm with the gesture of a cavalier and Sally Ann take it with a smile.

Chapter Nine

THE GARRISON BELLE

INVISIBLE but solid as a lofty stone wall stood the barrier of rank, dividing enlisted men from officers. Some officers built it higher and more impenetrable than it was ever intended to be. Old and embittered martinets or green lieutenants, uncertain of themselves, they issued orders like petty tyrants or slave-driving overseers. Others—fortunately in the great majority—exercised command in the true tradition of American armies which began when the Minute Men mustered at Lexington and Concord. For them and the men they led, the barrier denied neither mutual respect nor comradeship. Peter vividly recalled that story from St. Luke's gospel, told him by his officer father one day when they had been talking of rank. How the centurion's servant, who was dear to him, had fallen gravely ill, and the commander of a hundred had appealed, through the elders of the Jews, to Jesus to heal the dying man. Jesus was on the way to the Roman officer's house, when the centurion sent friends to meet him, saying:

"Lord, trouble not thyself, for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof. Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee; but say a word, and my servant shall be healed.

"For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.

"When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.

"And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick."

As it was in the Roman army, so must it be in the American. A soldier had to render his officers faithful obedience. It was authority, justly exercised, and the discipline it enforced that marked the difference between an army and a mob. And to command most capably an officer must keep himself a little apart and avoid that over-familiarity which breeds contempt. Neither Peter nor most of his fellow-troopers would have had it otherwise.

BUT that scene in the Custers' kitchen had upset Peter considerably. Rank seemed to have altogether too many privileges with Sally Ann. It was plain enough that Lieutenant Trelford and the rest of the young officers would be monopolizing her. She was a young lady now, and he, Peter, still a trooper. Peter saw now why Sally Ann was so insistent on his trying for a commission. That was a hard path, but it could be traveled; in fact, it had been achieved in the Seventh. Lieutenant Moylan, who had been the regimental sergeant major and a corking good one, had come up from the ranks. Custer had backed him every step. When the newly made lieutenant had been barred by a snobbish group from the junior officers' mess, the General had confounded them by inviting Moylan to become a member of his own household.

And Peter soon saw that Sally Ann had no intention of neglecting him. Ordered to escort her and Mrs. Custer on a morning ride, Peter saddled Humpty, and with his heart beating fast, fell in behind the ladies. No sooner were they out of sight of the post than, in response to a smiling gesture from Mrs. Custer, evidently admitted to the secret, Sally Ann dropped back to ride beside the trumpeter.

"Peter, where did you get that wonderful white hobby-horse?" the girl called with her old gay impudence. "I didn't have a chance in the kitchen to tell you about Justin. He's just grand, the darling. Pete, I swear he misses you. Every now and then I catch him looking for you wistfully."

"Gosh, I miss *him*. But he's your horse now, Sally Ann."

"Yours too, Pete. I promise you."

Out of a dust-cloud Bran looped up and leaped over Humpty's rump.

"Thought I told you to stay home," Peter chided the dog, "but now you're here, I guess you can stay. We can do with a scout like you in case there are any stray Indians around."

"What is that perfectly gorgeous creature?" Sally Ann demanded.

"He's a staghound, and he's mine." While the girl leaned from her saddle to pat the dog's fine head, Peter told her Bran's story. They were chattering away like old times when Bran signaled the approach of horsemen from the post, giving Sally Ann time to ride up beside Mrs. Custer. Shortly Peter recognized the riders as Captain Tom Custer and Lieutenant Trelford. He frowned grimly, all his happiness dispelled. This was the way it was going to be.

TRELFORD immediately ranged his mount beside Sally Ann's. The party broke into a canter, and Peter, wincing with jealousy, noted how admiringly the Lieutenant watched the girl's superb horsewomanship. Tom Custer bad joined his sister-in-law, but his eyes were busy roaming over the ground.

Watching for rattlesnakes, Peter surmised. The prairie swarmed with them. Few were free of a certain dread of rattlers, with their penchant for crawling into a man's blankets at night for warmth. But Captain Custer seemed fond of them. He collected rattlesnakes. As given to pranks and teasing as his brother, he seized any opportunity to play on the fears of poor Elizabeth Custer.

Now he sighted a quarry, a big snake with ten rattles or more. He swung out of the saddle, pulling his carbine from its boot. Peter also dismounted and grasped Bran by the collar; he would not risk the young hound's being bitten. As Tom approached, the rattler coiled, and its tail vibrated with warning clicks. Tom laughed and tempted it to spring. It launched itself at him like a javelin. He stepped back, and the reptile fell just short of his boot toes. Before it could coil again, he dexterously pinned its head to the ground with the butt of his carbine, then bent down, grasped it behind the head, picked it up writhing, and walked over with it to Mrs. Custer, who cringed in her saddle and drew back trembling.

"Well, old lady," he said with a grin, "I have a beauty to show you. Caught him just for you. Here you are."

Sally Ann cried out. "Oh, Captain, *don't!*"

Tom roared witb laughter. "Aha!" he shouted. "I've been rudely neglecting a guest. I apologize. This beauty is all yours, Miss Lindsay. Here, I present him to you."

He walked over, thrusting the rattlesnake's menacing triangular head straight at her. Its forked tongue darted out between its fangs, as it twisted and squirmed in his grasp.

Sally Ann turned white. With a rapid motion she drew a little derringer from beneath her blouse and shot the snake right out of the officer's hand.

Tom stood there, his arm still extended, his mouth gaping, and an expression of such stupefied amazement spread over his face that Peter burst out in loud guffaws and shouted, "Hurray for you, Sally Ann!" No sooner had he spoken than he bit his lip, but the words were out.

Lieutenant Trelford cast him a curious and angry glance.

"That will do, Trumpeter," he ordered sharply. "Return to the post. We will escort the ladies."
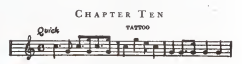
A MAN's dog was a great solace in time of trouble. Since the episode of the rattlesnake shooting when Peter had given himself away, he spent all his off-duty time with Bran. He did not dare even to visit the Custer kitchen for a glimpse of Sally Ann. Every officer in the regiment, he knew, was toasting and making much of the girl. They bad christened her Calamity Jane II, and declared she would wing a man with as little compunction as that famous frontierswoman and mule-skinner. Tom Custer now vied with his juniors as Sally Ann's devoted admirer.

Peter occupied himself in training Bran, encouraged by MacTavish, who was aware of his friend's depression. The Scot told him tales of the great hounds of legend and bistory: Of Fingal's Bran who hunted with a pack of one thousand, and for every stag captured by others Bran brought down three. Of Help and Hold, deerhounds of Sir William Clair, a knight who wagered with his king, his head against a royal manor, that the dogs, swimming across a river in pursuit of a stag, could turn it before it reached the further bank. Fast though they swam, they seemed unable to overtake their quarry. Sir William had resigned himself to death wben, only a few yards from the further shore, Help turned the stag and Hold seized him. When the dogs came to the end of their days, Sir William arranged that their likeness be carved in marble, crouched at the feet of his own effigy on his tomb.

MacTavish told, too, the tale of Llewellyn's famed hound Gellert. When the chieftain returned from a hunt, he found his dog, left on guard at home, covered with gore. Rushing in to see if anything had happened to his infant son, Llewellyn saw the babe lying in his overturned cradle, also drenched with blood. Certain the hound had slain the child, he stabbed Gellert through the heart. Only then did he discover a huge wolf under the bed, killed by the hound in defense of the babe, who was unharmed. Ever since, the place where the hound was buried with honor has been known as Beth Gellert, Grave of the Greyhound.

IN the Fourth Cavalry, her father's outfit where she had grown up, Sally Ann was the daughter of the regiment. Although she never had lacked attention there, here in the Seventh she was fervently courted as the garrison belle. It was different, and she loved it. For though to Sally Ann the Army was an old story, it was none the less a beloved one. She had been reared in the Service—an "Army brat," as the saying went for Army children.

CHAPTER TEN



TATTOO, sounded by two trumpets, floated across the parade-ground through the soft spring evening. Peter, his skill returned, was helping a green trumpeter of the guard blow the beautiful call, a high favorite along with Taps and the Call to Quarters. He explained to his pupil, as he had learned in his own apprenticeship, that Tattoo or "Taps to" originated iu Europe's Thirty Years' War, when its notes warned tavern-keepers to close the taps of wine-casks and serve no more to hard-drinking troopers. Now it had become a signal to duty sergeants at barracks to call the roll of their platoons and report all present or accounted for, or to note any absentees who might have overstayed their passes.

The tempo of Tattoo was quick, and the new windjammer needed Peter's support on the low C's toward its close. As it died away, Peter's spirits lifted. Tomorrow he might be sounding off in action, for he had been detailed to ride with the detachment Custer was taking out to round up a band of Sioux who had jumped their reservation.

Only two companies, Calhoun's and Keogh's, mounted up in the morning. This was no more than a preliminary to tbe big campaign for which the Seventh was preparing. A supply wagon, loaded with extra ammunition and rations, swung in behind the cavalry; it would be left under guard if need arose for fast movement to catch the fugitive Indians. Custer also took along some of his pack, with a view to hunting game as he rode. No foxhounds were included; they were better for the winter hunting in underbrush and timber, and they were apt

to be too noisy. Custer chose a half-dozen of the greyhounds and staghounds and gave Peter permission to take Bran.

Several dogs that might have gone were left home because they had indulged in an early morning chase after a "prairie dandy," as polecats were called because of their handsome black-and-white markings. The little animal had routed them with his tried and true defense; and when the reeking hounds came bounding back to the Custer quarters, sure of their usual welcome, they were driven out by their master and mistress and the wrathful Eliza, and led off by Scotty MacTavish in disgrace.

With the two companies formed in column of fours, the cavalcade rode across the plains, fresh with the breath of spring. Scouts fanned out ahead of the advance guard. Custer in buckskin, his long yellow curls streaming from under his broad-brimmed campaign hat, red bandana around his sunburned neck, galloped far to the left flank. The pack strung out after him. Back among the slower dogs, Peter pounded along on Humpty. Bran, who might have raced in the van, was content to run at his master's side.

It ran through Peter's mind: "Anybody would think we were hunting a fox, not Indians."

The illusion became still more vivid when the hounds spurted off after a jackrabbit. It was the swift Tuck, vying with the greyhounds, that seized the quarry and trotted back to Custer with it in his mouth.

The General waved his trumpeter forward and handed him the rabbit with a grin of pride. "It takes a fast dog to catch a jackrabbit," he declared. "And who says a staghound isn't a good retriever? Tie this long-eared fellow to your saddle, Shannon, and give him to the cook first chance you get. He'll flavor the stew."

Custer rode on at a walk, resting the dogs. Half to himself, half to Peter, riding to his left rear, he commenced talking.

"These Indians we're after—they're only one bunch of lots who'll be jumping the reservation this spring. By summer most of the Sioux nation will be out. The Cheyennes, too. Trust old Chief Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse for that.

"Can't say I blame 'em," Custer mused. "It's now or never for them. They know the sands are running out for their people. We're hemming them in everywhere. On the plains we're killing off the buffalo—the Indians' livelihood. We've taken the Black Hills, theirs by a treaty we made with them. No wonder they turned down the Government's offer of six million dollars for the Hills. They know about all the gold being mined there.

"General Sheridan says the Indians are destined to be crowded out. It's a fate they can't escape. It's what's always happened, all through history, when a strong, civilized people has moved in on nomad tribes.

"So the Army gets orders to herd the Indians back on their reservations. Naturally they don't want to go. Too many of 'em are rotting and starving there, with the Government's Indian agents grafting on their rations. I tell you, the trail of corruption leads so close up to the White House that—"

The General broke off suddenly. Those were words an enlisted man should not be allowed to overhear.

His mood altered swiftly. The dogs were off on a second chase. Whooping, Custer galloped after them at full speed. This time it was a big gray wolf. He led them three-quarters of a mile before he turned at bay. The kill was a mother-and-son performance. Heedless of the beast's terrible slashing snaps, Maida and Bran dashed in savagely and seized him. Peter heard their jaws crunch bone, and the wolf disappeared under a mass of growling hounds.

Lieutenant Calhoun galloped up. "Good riddance!" he said. "I remember a time we were camped out—you were away on leave, General. I was officer of the guard, and my good wife was alone in her tent. Maggie woke up in the middle of the night with some animal beside her cot, sniffing at her. She thought it was one of the dogs and offered it a piece of hardtack. The animal snatched it out of her hand and ran. Outside the tent one of my sentries fired. Maggie looked out at the body of a big timber wolf like this fellow. She's never felt hospitable toward any of your dogs at night since, General. They might be a wolf in disguise, and Maggie says she's through playing Little Red Riding-hood."

Custer laughed and ordered camp made.

Horses were watered, fed, groomed and picketed. Bacon and coffee cooked over the fires. Troopers, mess over, lay around smoking their pipes. Peter questioned his friend Sergeant Ellis, a veteran of long service whose dragoon's mustache was tinged with gray. The trumpeter asked him about the graft by Indian agents of which Custer complained so bitterly.

"There's plenty of it, all right," Ellis affirmed, "though there's some honest agents. But the crooked ones get away with it. Government pays 'em a salary of about fifteen hundred a year. In about four years they retire with fifty thousand dollars or better in loot, made out of grub and clothes that were supposed to be issued to the Injuns.

"No wonder the Injuns bust loose. I see their side of it. But you forget it quick enough when you see what they've done to some trooper in your outfit they took alive."

"Yes, I saw that in Texas," Peter answered grimly.

"Or what happens to a white girl they capture," Ellis went on. "She wishes she was dead before they get through passing her around from chief to chief, with jealous squaws making her do all the work and beating her black and blue all day. I've seen those girls afterwards. The Seventh has rescued some of 'em."

The Sergeant's words seemed destined for quick confirmation. Next morning when the detachment rode up to a cabin, a settler, rifle in hand, faced them across his broken-in door.

"Bunch of Sioux rid in yesterday," he announced laconically. "I was out of the house. Saw 'em from the draw yonder and was scairt to move. Robbed the place but didn't burn it, somehow. When they rid off, they took my daughter with 'em."

With action in prospect, Custer galvanized a command like an electric current. He snapped out a string of orders. Troopers stuffed extra ammunition and two days' rations into their saddlebags and swung into saddles. The wagon was left behind, guarded by a squad of cavalrymen whose horses were used up. No more wolf-hunting now—the quarry was fiercer game. Dogs, whining in protest, were collared and tied to the wagon wheels, but Custer left three free: Blucher, Tuck and Bran. Those sturdy staghounds could keep up.

Custer's eyes gleamed with pride in his hard-riding troopers. They made better than twenty miles that day, and halted for a few hours' sleep in the starlight. Charley Reynolds, the reliable old scout, had ridden on far ahead. An hour before dawn he galloped back to report:

"They're up thar, Gen'ral. Fair-sized village. Might be as many as a hundred braves, with their women and children. All quiet. Reckon they got hold of some liquor on raids, and they're sleepin' it off."

Custer listened with satisfaction, sitting his saddle with the look of an eagle about to swoop down on his prey. The shadowy figures of Keogh, Calhoun and their lieutenants gathered around the General to take his crisp, decisive orders. The prelude to the Battle of the Washita was to be enacted again, with Custer dividing his force

in that favorite maneuver of his, and hitting the enemy on all sides.

A quiet-spoken command, and the troops moved out. There were no sounds save the beat of hoofs, the creak of saddle-leather, the grunt of a horse here and there. Sabers, whose clanking might betray, had been left at the post.

Reynolds, riding beside the General, spoke softly. They were drawing near the Indian encampment. Custer's upflung right arm, faintly discernible in the fading starlight, halted the cavalcade. Smoothly it separated into four columns which rode off into the darkness to encircle the village. They were in position before the stars winked out in the first glimmer of the coming dawn.

Custer turned to Peter and lifted a hand. The stirring, staccato notes of Charge blared across the prairie. Troop trumpeters echoed it from the other three points of the compass. The four columns converged at a gallop, guidons snapping in the van. Again the trumpets sounded. "Left front into line." The rear squads obliqued, spurred and pounded abreast of leading squads. A two-rank cordon swept in as if it were a string drawing taut the mouth of a sack. Peter saw one platoon detached to cut out the Indian pony herd. Lines deployed and closed the gap.

A PACK of howling Indian dogs came boiling out of the village in full cry. One look at the three staghounds, and the mongrels fled yelping, tails between legs. So close on their heels rode the blue cavalry that sleepy Indians, snatching up weapons and bursting out of tepees, found themselves surrounded and covered. They stared sullenly into the muzzle of leveled carbines ringing them around, dropped their rifles and bows and hoisted their hands. Not a shot had been fired.

The band's chief stalked up to Custer and asked him to smoke the pipe at a parley.

"No talk," Custer snapped. "You're prisoners, and we're taking you right back to the reservation. But first hand over that white girl you carried off, and if you've done her any harm, you'll pay for it! Where is she?"

The scowling chief pointed. "She in my lodge there."

The General dismounted. "Lead the way," he ordered, and strode alone after the chief. Captain Keogh ran after them, making a protest.

"Sir," he begged, "let me take a squad into that lodge first and clear the place out. Might be an ambush."

Keogh knew Indian trickery. There might be half a dozen Sioux inside, and they would have a splendid opportunity to knife the General, once he entered. But Custer, brave to the point of rashness, flung an order over his shoulder for the troops to force the Sioux to break camp, pack up and be ready to travel in fifteen minutes. Followed only by the three dogs, Old Curley walked calmly up to the tepee and disappeared inside. Its flap closed behind him. Outside, the staghounds stood guard, bristling. No Indian dared approach within ten feet of them.

Peter watched Bran with pride. The young staghound was thrice the size of any of the Indian dogs. Probably the red men originally possessed bigger and better breeds, for they had owned dogs when the white man first invaded the continent, and those animals then had served as their only beasts of burden. When war steeds, brought over by the Spaniards, fell into the hands of the Indians, or escaped and bred with wild herds, the horse supplanted dogs with the savages for pack and draft. More important, horses served the tribes as mounts, with the result that the plains Indians became the superb cavalry they now were. Dogs, no longer as essential, had degenerated into camp sentinels or a source of food.

The speed and efficiency with which the Indians broke camp, hastened by an occasional shove from a carbine butt, fascinated Peter. In a matter of seconds the tepees

The kill was a mother-and-son performance.

were struck, the squaws doing most of the work. The tepee poles, bound one on each side of a pony, with a crosspiece or two, formed the travois frame. On that the buffalo hides which had been the shelter's wall, were loaded, along with buffalo robes, blankets, kettles and other gear. Squaws, some with papooses strapped to their backs, climbed on the ponies. Small children and old people perched themselves on travois.

When General Custer emerged from the council lodge in exactly fifteen minutes, the entire band was in readiness to take the trail. He beckoned Keogh, who hurried up.

"Take over, Captain Keogh," Custer ordered. "Form your men up on both flanks and in rear of the prisoners and head for the reservation. Move at once. I'll follow directly."

The mouth of the Irish soldier of fortune gaped. Was the white girl inside the lodge? How many Indians were in there beside the chief? What in thunder was the General up to, anyway?

Keogh's mouth clamped shut. He opened it only to utter, "Yes sir." He saluted, knowing better than to oppose Old Curley twice.

Custer ducked back inside the lodge and dropped the flap.

The two companies of cavalry escorting the Sioux rode off, leaving the camp with its one tepee still standing. In every flabbergasted officer and trooper bubbled emotions in which curiosity and apprehension for the General were mingled.

Peter spared a glance back. The three staghounds still stood guard outside the lodge. That, at least, was reassurance.

WORRIED, Keogh, kept the column at a slow walk. In any event, the prisoners could not move much faster, and they too—so far as one could read their impassive faces—looked puzzled and ill at ease. Their chief could not be regarded as any too safe in the company of the formidable Yellow Hair, as the Indians called Custer. The white leader might come galloping up flourishing a black-haired scalp.

A mile, then another and another, was covered. At last came the sound of pounding hoofs. Through their own dust-cloud, escort and prisoners sighted the Sioux chief overtaking them at a trot. After him rode his squaw on a pony hitched to a travois. The vigilant staghounds bounded along on either flank. Custer brought up the rear. There was, however, no sign of the white girl.

As the Indians joined the other prisoners and Custer rode on to the head of the column, Peter thought that his commander's countenance, which never tanned but reddened under the sun, was more crimson than usual. The trumpeter was ordered to sound "Officers' Call," and the commissioned personnel galloped up to ride in a knot around the General. Troopers saw that he was

recounting what had happened, and that the officers were drinking it in with amazement. Not until the halt for noon mess did it filter down through the grapevine to the rank and file. . . .

Custer, as soon as his eyes became accustomed to the dim light of the lodge's interior, had seen the settler's daughter seated on a buffalo robe. Back in the shadows behind the chief sat a third figure. Instantly on his guard, Custer demanded of the chief:

"Who's that there? Speak up."

"Him friend. Trader," the chief identified the other man.

Probably a half-breed or a squaw-man, then. Many such were the scoundrels who were selling the Indians firearms and liquor. Little could be done about them unless you caught them red-handed. Custer turned back to the girl.

"Are you all right?" he asked, scanning her carefully.

She stared back at him brazenly. Custer took in her bold good looks. "Certain, I'm all right," she answered.

"We came along fast, soon as we found your father at his cabin and heard the Indians had you," the General declared. "I'm glad we were in time."

"Weren't no hurry," she remarked. "I got treated fine."

Custer regarded the chief with a quizzical frown. "So much the better for you," he told him. Then he addressed the girl again. "All right, Miss. We'll take you back home on our way to the reservation."

"Won't be troublin' you," she answered shortly. "I'm stickin' with my friend here."

"No," Custer decided. He had managed a plainer survey of the figure in the background, and was not in the least prepossessed by him. "Guess you'd better come along with us, Miss."

The settler's daughter flared up. "You're not givin' me orders. I'm free, white and twenty-one, I am. I tell you, I've stood all I'm agoin' to of that old devil of a paw of mine. Works me to the bone, he does, and never lets me have no fun." She nodded toward the trader. "Him and me's goin' to get married."

Nothing Custer could say had any effect. It was useless warning this woman that a man she had picked up with a day ago was likely to abandon her as soon as he tired of her, and that probably would not take long. The argument ended with her "sassing" the General in language that was far from ladylike, and daring him to stop her.

Custer controlled his impulse to force her to return home. What a fine spectacle he would make, riding up to his troops holding a kicking hussy in front of his saddle. There was a good chance, too, that if he used force, the trader would put a bullet in him from behind.

General Custer knew he was beaten. With such dignity as he could manage, he let the couple go, ignoring broad grins on the faces of the chief and the trader. Custer had told that story on himself to his officers, chuckling at his own predicament.

At the noon halt, Trumpeter Shannon was surprised with a summons to report to his Commanding Officer.

"Shannon, you've heard about what happened in the lodge?" the General began.

"Yes sir. Happens I have."

The General burst out laughing. "The grapevine is the most reliable system of communications in the Army," he avowed. "But there's something that happened toward the last I can't understand. It was that hound of yours, Shannon.

"He's a good dog. Didn't he tear into that wolf the other day, though! But I've never known him to act hostile toward anybody in the outfit, or any dog—except, of course, that scrap with Lufra, and that was a fair fight. Well, when we came out of the lodge, hanged if Bran didn't go for that trader fellow with fangs bared. I tell you, Bran was going to take him apart then and there. I managed to get a grip of his collar, and it was all I could do to hold him."

"I can't figure it out, sir," Peter said. "Never knew him to do anything like that before . . . Wait! There *was* that time we went after the deserters and— Sir, did that trader have red hair and a beard and—"

"Sure he did!" Custer exclaimed. "I've got it. He was that deserter from the Fourth you reported. The man that tried to ride you down, and Bran scared him off."

"Yes sir. It must have been Rick, all right. He was smart, staying inside the tepee so's none of us who'd seen him before could spot him."

"Like to lay hands on him," the General snapped. "But it's too late now. He and the girl have a long headstart. The chief let 'em have a couple good ponies.

"Shannon," he finished, "we'll take that staghound of yours along whenever we're likely to run into any rascals or renegades. As surely as he knows his friends, a dog remembers his enemies."

Chapter Eleven

FULL DRESS

Peter and MacTavish were getting into uniform for one of the dress parades which Custer was fond of staging for dignitaries visiting Fort Abe.

" 'Fine feathers make the bird,' " Scotty quoted sententiously, regarding his gala get-up with distaste, " 'but fine clothes dinna make the mon.' "

"You don't like the new full dress, Scotty?" Peter asked. "Me, now, I think it really tricks out the regiment and makes a grand show." He polished brighter the gilt eagle blazoned on the front of his black-lacquered helmet, copied from the British Horse Guards. From its spike streamed a horse-hair plume, dyed cavalry yellow. Frogged braids of the same hue spanned the chest of his dark blue tunic; on its arms were sewn the stripes and bugle of his rank. The buckle of his saber belt, his scabbard, and his high boots and spurs glistened in the sun pouring through the barracks' windows; the twin yellow stripes of a trumpeter ran down the sides of his breeches, which were of lighter blue than the tunic. On his cot lay white gauntlets and his trumpet—its cord repeated the cavalry color.

"I dinna like it," the Scot declared flatly. He quoted again, this time from his favorite, Bobbie Burns.

> *"O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us*
> *To see oursels as ithers see us!*
> *It wad frae monie a blunder free us,*
> *An' foolish notion:*
> *What airs in dress an' gait wad lea'e us,*
> *An' e'vn devotion!"*

"Some Pow'r did give us that giftie, Scotty," Peter pointed out. "Take a look at yourself in that mirror." He indicated a fragment of looking-glass affixed to the wall. "Won't anything satisfy you Scots but plaids?"

"Aye, tartans." Scotty glowed. "Aye, I'd gladly don them again. Kilt and sporran. Blue bonnet on my head and claymore at my side, and the folds of the long plaid ower my shoulder."

Resplendent in full dress, Peter strode out to the parade-ground, hooking up his saber and shifting his trumpet to the carry under his left arm. There was still twenty minutes before Assembly. He might meet Sally Ann. For once, Peter told himself, he could stand up

beside that glorified shavetail Trelford, and not feel like the fellow that wore his working clothes to the party.

Peter sighted Sally Ann strolling along the edge of the parade-ground. For a wonder, she was not surrounded by officers, and she had detached herself from a group of ladies waiting to watch the review. It was marvelous what an Army woman out on the frontier, who seldom or never had a chance to visit New York shops, could do when an occasion called for gay apparel.

Peter, pretending to be engaged in some important duty, touched the brim of his helmet, as he hurried by.

"Halt!" called Sally Ann. "About face! What's all the rush? Going to blow the Call to Arms, are you, Trumpeter?"

"I know somebody who wouldn't answer it, if I did."

The girl blushed vividly. "Pete, you're mad at me," she charged. "Just how do you expect me to act? Would the Custers ever invite me again if I moped around in my room all day and spent every evening in the kitchen? I hate not seeing you more, Peter, but isn't this a lot better than you being in New Haven and me 'way off in New Mexico?"

It was all perfectly reasonable, but Peter, jealous and unhappy, was beyond reasonableness.

"No, this is worse. It's just tantalizing, having you so near and never seeing you except once in a while by accident, or on the sly. It's no use, Sally Ann. An enlisted man hasn't got a chance. It's better if we just forget each other. 'By. I'm due at stables."

"Oh, Peter, wait! You don't mean that! Come over tonight. There's a party, but I'll get a headache and beg off and slip out to the kitchen. I've got to hear about that round-up of the Sioux and how that awful Rick turned up again—and lots of things."

"Sorry, but I'm on duty."

Sally Ann stamped a small foot. "I don't believe you!"

"Don't, then."

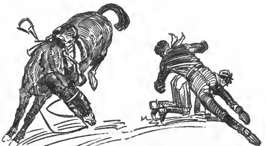
"Oh, Pete, let's not quarrel." Sally Ann's brown eyes, which had been flashing, grew tender. "Do you realize how handsome you look in full dress?"

"Thanks. Even without any epaulettes?"

Peter knew he was acting unpardonably, but he could not seem to help it. He raised a hand to his helmet in farewell. But he faced only a trim, indignant back and the expanse of a little green parasol which seemed to say: "*That* for you!"

The trumpeters of the Seventh, who were to ride massed in the review today, assembled and stood to horse. They breathed into their instruments to warm them, making little guttural snorts and limbering their lips. Today they would display a clever musical device, adopted by Chief Musician Vinatori. Since only five notes can be sounded on the trumpet, several players were provided with trumpets in different keys. The men furnished these blew only notes which would have been sharps or flats in the key of the majority of the trumpets, and hence not in their range. Thus the field music was able to play scores which otherwise could only be performed by the cornets, clarinets and trombones of the band.

Yonder where the band had fallen in, Adjutant Cooke, whose responsibility it was, made an anxious last-minute inspection, but he could find nothing out of order in the Seventh's band this afternoon. When it was mounting up, the bass-drummer's horse had acted skittish but that was quite as usual. That animal, boasting as much temperament as any musician, tried to emulate a bucking bronco and throw his rider, until the drum was strapped on his back. Once it was aboard, and the horse Whitey was assured that it was indeed there by several deep booms thumped out on it, he became as calm and contented a steed as anyone could ask. Obviously the bass-drum was his pride and joy, and without it Whitey simply refused to be imposed upon by any man. Drummer Jenks, who had been tossed off too often for his liking, took pains to let the horse know that the drum was among those present on the hurricane deck. If his steed ever grew skeptical while the band was not playing, the drummer tapped the drumhead gently to reassure him and play safe.



As Old Pizen cocked his haunches for a lethal kick, Peter dashed in.

The review commenced. As usual the Seventh acquitted itself nobly. Squadrons passed at walk, trot and gallop to spectators' applause. The massed trumpeters gave a spirited rendition of *That Little German Band.* Vinatori's bandsmen took over in their turn, not only a treat to the ear but a spectacle for the eye on their matched white mounts.

The music ceased, as the review drew toward its close. That period of silence was chosen by the horse Whitey to be seized with one of his attacks of skepticism. Was the big drum still up there aboard him? He had not heard it for some time. The drummer, sensing his steed's disquiet, produced two or three soft beats. Whitey was not convinced. He curveted a bit and arched his back. Drummer Jenks was overwhelmed by sudden panic. Come what may, impending catastrophe must be averted. He drew back his stick and hit his drum a mighty wallop.

It happened that the stroke came at the moment when the band, countermarching, was passing the massed trumpeters. The unexpected boom reverberated like a thunderclap. Whitey was satisfied; but Peter's mount Humpty, only a few feet away at that instant, was startled to within an inch of his life. With a wild squeal of terror, he broke ranks and dashed away.

Peter, sitting his saddle loosely, his melancholy thoughts elsewhere, was caught completely off guard. Humpty ran away with him, skidded to a four-footed stop at the edge of the parade-ground and pitched him off in a soaring arc. Right in front of a knot of ladies, Trumpeter Shannon smote the parade-ground with his bottom and a dull thud, and sat there.

The best of horsemen have been policed in their time, and taken it with good grace as part of the game. But circumstances alter tossings. Sally Ann rushed forward from the group of ladies, took one look at her seated friend's inimitable expression and burst into gales of laughter.

"Oh, Peter," she gasped helplessly. "You look so-o-o very funny!"

Peter glared up at her. "Oh, do I!" he snapped. Without another word, he picked himself up, ran to where a grinning trumpeter had caught and held Humpty, mounted up and took his place in ranks.

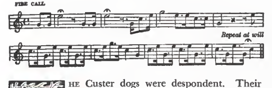
He did not heed Sally Ann's anxious call: "Peter! I'm sorry. You're not hurt?" He tore up, unread, the tearful note of apology she later sent him by Eliza.



Choking, blinded, Peter rushed Old Pizen from the stable.

Sally Ann's headache was a real one that night. She did not come down to the Custers' party, but stayed in her room and sobbed herself to sleep.

Chapter Twelve





THE Custer dogs were despondent. Their once sprightly friend Sally Ann seldom played with them any more. Overshadowing her neglect was the abstraction of General and Mrs. Custer, stricken with some serious worry of their own. The pervading gloom was infectious, and Eliza, MacTavish and Burkman shared it.

For the General was face to face with a situation which he knew might prove the most heartbreaking of his career. "Custer's luck," as the Army termed it, seemed about to desert him. Custer could look back over his career to one lucky combination of circumstances after another. Graduating at the bottom of his class at West Point, he had plunged into the midst of the War Between the States to win victory after victory and climb the ladder of promotion with astonishing speed. After the war, in the review of the Grand Army in Washington, Custer's charger ran away with him. Down the line of march he galloped alone, sitting his horse like a centaur, yellow hair streaming, the very image of martial gallantry. Though critics carped that no horse ever had run away with Custer without urging, the eyes of a nation, already doting on him as one of its heroes, dwelt on him that day. On through the Indian wars, the "breaks" for which every soldier hopes abetted the General's undeniable abilities and fearless leadership.

But now a turn of the tide threatened. Exposures of grafting by Indian agents and post traders—exposures Custer had helped make—had exploded in a national scandal. As the General's soliloquy that day in Peter's hearing had declared, the trail led up close to the White House. Secretary of War Belknap had resigned under fire and barely escaped impeachment by the Senate. Evidence, some of it assembled by Custer, showed that tens of thousands of dollars in tribute money had been paid by traders to higher-ups. President Grant's personal honesty was not shared by some of his subordinates, and the stern efficiency of the one-time Commander of the Union armies had sadly faded in the Chief Executive.

Custer had been outspoken in his accusations. Now he must back them up. He had been ordered to Washington to testify before a Congressional committee on War Department expenditures. As an opportunity to correct conditions which gravely hampered his duties on the frontier, the summons was to be welcomed. But he was well aware that an Army officer who criticizes Government actions risks his career with a certain type of politician. And these orders to leave his post and report in Washington would deprive him of a cherished opportunity.

"Custer's luck." That sounded ironical now. The big campaign against the Sioux and Cheyennes was imminent; in fact, it already had commenced. Dispatches informed Custer that a column under General Crook, conqueror of the Apaches, was marching down the Powder River Valley to strike the defiant Chief Crazy Horse. Only bad weather had prevented General Terry from launching other columns, to include the Seventh Cavalry.

To be ordered away on the eve of action was more than Custer could bear. He forwarded an earnest request that he be allowed to make sworn depositions of his testimony and remain to command his regiment in the field. Yet he could not rid himself of dire forebodings that his plea would be denied.

The French sage Lamartine once wrote: "Whenever man is unhappy, God sends him a dog." Yet Custer, blessed with an abundance of that solace, would have none of it; his mercurial temperament, which could soar to the heights, plunged as readily to the depths.

MacTavish marched up to the porch to second Mrs. Custer's efforts in cheering the worried General by forcing his dogs on his attention. "Cardigan seems nae so well," the Scot reported. He described various symptoms of the hound's, mostly imaginary. "I dinna ken what's wrong wi' him. Maybe the General—"

Custer rose and went inside to his desk, where he always kept a book of dog remedies. A dose of medicine was concocted and poured down the throat of Cardigan. Custer relapsed into melancholy, but finally he jumped to his feet. "Where's Burkman?" he shouted. "MacTavish, have him saddle up Dandy. And mounts for Mrs. Custer and Miss Lindsay, too, headache or not. It's time we took the pack out for a run. If we see any suitors, we'll sic the hounds on 'em. Failing that, we'll loose 'em on a crocodile, or at least a jackrabbit. Tally-ho!"

He whistled. Yelping joyously, dogs converged on him from all sides.

Gay spirits, much more natural to General Custer, returned for a time, but they did not last long. A War Department wire curtly denied his request to remain with his regiment and ordered him to report at Washington without further delay. Reluctantly he turned over command to Major Reno, declaring he would be back as soon as possible.

There was a bare chance that Custer might return in time to lead the Seventh against the Sioux.

BOTH Peter and Lieutenant Trelford were detailed to guard duty the day Major Reno took the regiment out for a full day's march. Only the old guard and the new and various fatigue parties remained on the post.

Sternly Peter told himself: "Watch yourself on this tour, Shannon. Better mind your P's and Q's and every other letter in the alphabet. Trelford's officer of the

guard, and this is the first time he's had you where he wants you—right under his command. Slip up just once and that shavetail will take the greatest delight in landing on you like a ton of bricks."

There went Assembly for guard mount. Details for the new guard mustered from various companies, and at the guardhouse the two reliefs of the old guard off post formed up. The band marched out and took its station on the parade-ground. No good outfit neglected performing this daily ceremony with precision and flourish, for it emphasized the fact that guard duty, uneventful and monotonous though it often was, nevertheless was vital.

Adjutant's Call, and Lieutenant Cooke, sidewhiskers jutting out, and the sergeant major took their posts. The band struck up in quick time, and the details were marched out and reported. Cooke commanded: "Officers and non-commissioned officers, front and center, march." Trelford, saber at the carry, moved forward smartly with his non-coms and was designated commander of the guard. Meticulously he inspected his men, noting every detail of uniform and giving carbines a careful going-over from bore to butt. The Lieutenant, Peter observed, never missed a trick, and his corrections of any fault were sharp and to the point.

Cooke called: "Parade rest. Sound off." The band, playing, marched down the line, countermarched, resumed its post and blared forth once more, as the guards passed in review. The intricate ceremony, its every feature exactly prescribed, concluded without a hitch in spite of the presence of a number of recruits in the ranks.

Back at the guardhouse, Peter settled himself on a bench inside the guardroom. Cooke's and Trelford's voices drifted in through the window.

"It went off very neatly, Mr. Trelford," the Adjutant complimented.

"Yes sir." Trelford thanked him, then chuckled. "But right in the midst of it I started thinking of that review the other day and thanking my stars guard mount is dismounted. There was no chance for my trumpeter of the guard to get policed by his horse."

"You can't altogether blame young Shannon," Cooke protested. "That bass-drummer let go with a terrific boom right beside him."

"Right, sir," Trelford conceded. "All I hope is that no Sioux warrior ever bangs a rifle next to him."

The officers had lowered their voices, but Peter had heard all too plainly. He scowled darkly and clenched his fists.

Bran considered that he had been detailed to guard duty along with his master. He lay quietly at Peter's feet in the guardroom until the trumpeter rose to sound one of the routine calls. The staghound followed him out to the edge of the parade-ground, took position to the trumpeter's left "at heel" and remained in an attitude of canine attention while the call was finished.

If Peter had been a sentry, Bran, unless prevented, would have walked post with him in the ancient tradition of military dogs which are as old as war itself. The armies of the Assyrians, the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans employed them. Many a sleeping town and camp was saved by their warning barks. The dog Soter, whose alertness prevented the capture of Corinth, was pensioned for life and given a silver collar engraved, "*Defender and Saviour of Corinth.*" In the Napoleonic wars, the dog Moustache was thrice cited; for warning of a surprise attack, for catching an Austrian spy, and for recapturing a standard from the enemy.

Now that Peter's skill in trumpeting had returned, Bran no longer uttered protesting howls. At the end of well-blown calls he wagged his tail. Peter said to himself: "He's probably sensed that I'm sort of pleased with myself, and he's glad, but I'm going to take it as a compliment from a good music critic."

That night as he sounded the plaintive note of Taps, Peter felt certain that he would draw some complimentary tail-waggings from the dog beside him. Nor was his appreciative audience limited to one. Across the parade ground in the lighted doorway of the Custer quarters he saw a small figure appear and stand listening. A memory of such overwhelming poignance swept him that he could scarcely complete the call. Again he was standing on the Lindsay porch in that Texas spring night, of two years ago, saying good-by to Sally Ann. Taps, sounded by four trumpeters in harmony and with an echo was floating to them over the Fourth's parade-ground, and Sally Ann was singing the words Bret Harte wrote for it—as perhaps she was singing them now:

Love, good-night.
Must you go
When the day
And the night
Need you so?
Though we part,
Ever rest
In my heart.

Peter sounded the last, long-drawn note, and in it was all his pent-up longing. He lowered the trumpet, his throat choked. To repeat the call as he should have done was utterly beyond him. It would be some minutes before he could regain enough hold on himself to reënter the guardroom.

The lighted doorway across the parade showed empty. That, Peter realized, was fortunate. If the appealing little figure still had been standing there, he could not have kept himself from deserting his post and running over to Sally Ann.

In the Custer kitchen, a girl was sobbing her heart out on Eliza's bosom. The soft Negro voice comforted her.

"Jes' cry yo'self out, Miss Sally Ann, and don' fret no mo'. He'll be comin' back co'tin' you ag'in soon. He jes' cain't help hisself. Eliza knows it."

"Oh, no, he won't, Eliza," the girl answered through her tears. "He's proud, and I hurt him terribly in front of everybody. Oh, why did I ever do it, Eliza?"

Peter woke to insistent tugging at his sleeve. Reaching over with his other hand, he felt Bran's head. Instantly he tumbled out of his guardroom bunk—he had learned to trust the staghound. Something must be wrong.

For a time, as Peter struggled awake, there was no sound save the snoring of the reliefs off post. Then clear in the night air he heard distant shouting.

"Corporal of the Guard. Post Number Eight. *Fire!*"

Peter ran outside; Number Eight—that was the supply-train stables, and most of the mules were there. Reno had taken no wagons on his march; only a few pack-animals.

The guardhouse erupted men. Peter had warmed his instrument's mouthpiece and wiped it off with the back of his hand when Lieutenant Trelford, staring toward the stables, yelled:

"Trumpeter! Where's that trumpeter?"

"Here, sir." In the darkness he was at the officer's elbow.

"Sound Fire Call."

Woe betide the frontier trumpeter who did not know Fire Call! The wooden buildings of a post were dreadfully vulnerable in winter when stoves were stoked red-hot against the bitter cold. Prairie grass, dried to tinder by the summer sun, was a constant menace. Always the hay and straw bedding of the stables lay ready to blaze up when a soldier or teamster sneaked a forbidden smoke—almost certainly the cause tonight.

Peter blasted out the call with all the strength of his lungs. Facing in the opposite direction, he repeated it. As he finished, he muttered under his breath: "Guess that'll keep the Loot from saying anything about sand in my trumpet or lack of it in my gizzard."

Trelford, volleying orders at the non-coms of the guard, burst out: "Worst time it could happen. Not forty men left on the post. Shannon, repeat that call twice more. Then get down to those stables and see what you can do."

WINDOWS lit up all over the post. Dark figures, running, converged on the burning stable. Already blazing embers, carried by a brisk wind, had ignited the roof of the next structure.

Cooke, Trelford, and several sergeants began organizing bucket brigades from water barrels to the fire. Peter, breathless from trumpeting, doubled after them. In the lurid glare he saw teamsters and soldiers leading mules from the burning stables. Thank God, it was the mule, not the horse stables, that were afire, even though there were few animals left in the latter! Horses became panicky with abject terror when they were caught in a burning building. Even if they broke their halter ropes, they often stayed and let themselves be burned to death. You could not lead or drive them out unless you blindfolded them. Mules were different. Did they draw their wisdom from their jackass sires? However it was, they broke free and made their escape at the first opportunity, or kicked their way through a wall, or docilely and sensibly let men rescue them.

Peter raced to one of the farther, untouched stables. Teamsters, who had led out their mules, were standing watching the fire.

"You, there," Peter shouted in a voice that rang with authority. "Harness and hitch right away. Take your wagons over there and load up empty water barrels. Fast now!"

He rode the first wagon of the string that rumbled up to the bucket brigades. Nearly all the barrels had been emptied. Sweating troopers flung them into the wagons. A grimy Trelford called out with satisfaction:

"Good going! Fill 'em up at the creek and get back here at the gallop. Hanged, if some non-com hasn't used his head!" He turned to recognize Peter directing the teamsters. "Oh," he said, "it's you."

Over the half-mile to the creek the wagons roared, mule teams at a dead gallop, teamsters yelling and cracking whips, barrels rattling in the beds like giant castanets. Precious water replenished, the wagons came clattering and careening back. They were too late to save the first stable, but the fire in the second was controlled. Trip after trip the wagons made, and troopers drenched other smoldering roofs.

Farther along the line a gust carried a spark to still another stable. Tongues of flames soared up. A teamster shouted that all the mules were out of it, and fire-fighters, still hard-pressed elsewhere, were compelled to let it burn.

Again Peter felt a tug at his sleeve. It was Bran, who seldom had left his side. The dog all but told him in words: "Quick! We're needed at that stable."

Peter tried to disregard the summons. Somehow he found it beyond his power. Drawn by Bran's insistence, he followed the staghound at the double. As they approached, Peter heard a racket which proved the teamster had been mistaken. There was at least one mule still in there. The night resounded to angry braying and a thunderous rat-tat-tat of iron-shod shoes on boards.

Ah, Stable B. That would be Old Pizen.

Thick smoke belched out of the door in crimsoned billows. Hoof-beats rang out louder but there was no splintering crash in answer. Even Old Pizen could not batter himself an exit.

Peter hesitated at the door. What was an old mule's life to his? The beast probably would kick his would-be rescuer to death.

The trumpeter jammed his hat down on his head and drew a long breath. He and the dog plunged into the flaming stable.

Choking, blinded, he groped his way forward. Bran rubbed against him. Peter grasped his collar and the staghound led him on. Yonder a bale of hay blazed up to show Old Pizen, still tethered by the double-strength halter rope used on him. At once the redoubtable old rascal stopped kicking. Peter untied him without difficulty and rushed him out of the stable.

Outside Peter beat out the sparks in Bran's hide and his own uniform. He reached up to pat Old Pizen's neck and said:

"That ought to show you, you old battering-ram, that I've got no hard feelings." . . .

The next morning, skin blistered, eyebrows scorched, Peter reported to the Adjutant, as ordered.

"Fine work last night, Shannon," Lieutenant Cooke complimented, stroking one luxuriant sideburn.

"Thank you, sir."

"Want to show you a paragraph in a regimental order. Major Reno or the General will sign it—whoever returns first."

Peter's eyes quickly caught his name under a Promotions heading:
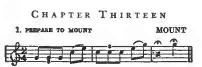
"To be Corporal-Trumpeter: Trumpeter Peter Shannon, HQ. Co."

As he spoke his thanks and saluted, he heard the Adjutant remark:

"Lieutenant Trelford's recommendation."

The first rung of the ladder! But Peter, striding back to barracks, found his elation somewhat tempered. If only the promotion had not come through Trelford. It was a lot easier to have a rival who treated you like dirt and made mean cracks about your misfortunes. A decent fellow who saw you got a boost if you deserved one—that made it tough.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN





OVER the "whispering wires," as the Indians called the telegraph, bad news had reached Fort Abraham Lincoln. The officers' mess and the barracks of the Seventh buzzed with it.

General Crook's column had suffered a severe repulse at the hands of the Sioux and Cheyennes. Marching north in bitter, unseasonable cold, Crook had sent three squadrons of cavalry ahead for a surprise attack on the big village of Chief Two Moons, beside the bluffs of the Powder River. A brave Indian herdboy, though covered by an officer's revolver, whooped an alarm, and the charging cavalrymen met a storm of withering fire. Horses plunged, reared and crashed down; but closing up their ranks, the troopers galloped on to capture the village and the Indian pony herd.

As the cavalry set fire to the lodges, the hostiles counter-attacked. Troopers fought them off through a morning so frigid that ears, noses, feet and hands froze. Burning lodges gave a little warmth, but some soldiers were forced to the drastic resort of plunging congealing hands through air-holes into the ice-locked river. Nevertheless the defense held, and Crook could be counted on to come up soon in support.

But the colonel commanding the squadrons in action failed to hold his ground. Suddenly and inexplicably,

he ordered a retreat. So hasty was the retirement that one wounded trooper was shamefully abandoned to torture. Triumphant warriors in hot pursuit recaptured many of their ponies. When the squadrons returned to the main force, the furious Crook relieved the commander, who was court-martialed and resigned.

The news of defeat caused grim looks in the Seventh; yet they were not long in lightening, for that defeat was on another outfit's record. "Now if the Seventh had been there," the men told each other, "it wouldn't have happened." And it was clear to everyone that Crook's repulse, by delaying the entire campaign, would allow more time for Custer to return, resume command and lead his own regiment against the Sioux.

But would Old Curley make the grade? Here too the news was gloomy. Custer was in hot water up to his neck. The Seventh heard that his testimony had deeply offended Grant—that some of it had been branded hearsay, not evidence; that the President had kept him sitting in Washington, refusing either to see him or to let him leave; that Generals Sherman, Sheridan and Terry, especially the last-mentioned, who was conducting the campaign and was begging for Custer's services, had vainly interceded.

At last came the break: Grant had yielded, and the Seventh's commanding officer was on his way back to his regiment. "Custer's luck!"

The Seventh began preparing a celebration for its returning leader. No formal review, with the regiment parading in his honor, would serve. Only something unusual and uproarious would suit the high spirits of the jubilant General.

Some genius suggested a mule race, with officers, General Custer included, as jockeys.

Peter Shannon, told by MacTavish that Mrs. Custer wished to see him, obeyed with reluctance. It was likely to be some ruse to bring him and Sally Ann together; it seemed as if older women simply could not resist matchmaking.

But Mrs. Custer was alone on the porch when Peter walked up. He lifted his forage cap; and whether his summons was a subterfuge or not, immediately melted, as all men did when confronted by Elizabeth Custer's charm. At once she greeted him:

"Congratulations, Corporal Shannon. I'm told you did marvelous things at the fire. Your stripes are well deserved, and may you change them for a sergeant's before long!"

"Thanks a lot, Mrs. Custer." Peter glowed with pleasure.

"I'm going to ask a favor of you, Corporal."

"I'll be glad to do anything I can," Peter blurted, then bit his lip. This would be some trick to reconcile him and Sally Ann.

But he was entirely mistaken, for Mrs. Custer asked: "You've heard about the mule race?"

"Yes ma'am, a bit."

"I'm so happy it's to be that, and not a horse race. I hate horse races that people bet on; and when our officers ride their chargers in steeplechases, it's dreadfully dangerous. For the mule race, there'll just be a prize, and the slowest mule—the one that comes in last—will be the winner. Nobody will be hurt if he's tossed off that way, and it's all going to be so funny.

"Now, General Custer is going to ride, but he'll be back too late to choose and train his mount. If he were here, of course he'd pick the most stubborn mule in the regiment."

"Yes ma'am, Old Pizen."

Eliza called from the door: "That's the mos' con*trary* animule ever I see."

"Old Pizen it is." Mrs. Custer's laughter was silvery. "Would you mind training him for the General?"



Just fed, the staghound pack lolled in contented ease.

"I'd be glad to try. Old Pizen's my friend now, I think."

"He ought to be, after you kept him from being burned alive. Thank you ever so much, Corporal Shannon. Good-by."

Peter, leaving, was conscious of aching disappointment. There had been no sign whatever of Sally Ann. She was probably out riding with Trelford.

Down at the mule stables, officer-jockeys were selecting their mounts. Each made it a point to pick the most obstreperous animal available. Teamsters pushed forward, enthusiastically recommending some member of their own teams.

"Here you are, sir. If it's laziness and a slow freight the Captain's looking for, this here brute takes the cake. . . . . Take Prairie Rose here, sir. She ain't never been ridden, and she'll be better'n a balloon. . . . Lootenant, if you want to come in last, Rattler's yer mule. When he ain't a-kicking, he's a-backing up."

It shortly became apparent to Peter that he had his work cut out for him as Old Pizen's trainer, Jake Small, the mule's teamster, washed his hands of the affair.

"All right, Shannon," he said. "Be a danged fool if you want. I've druv that mule years, and I know better. Reckon you don't. First he kicks your slats in when you j'ined up. Next you gits yerself singed savin' him when the consarned old critter is 'bout to git burned up like he deserves. Now what you fixin' to do? Git the Gin'ral up on his back! Man, there's stuff in the Articles of War ag'in' that. Malicious an' murderous assault on a superior officer—that's what. Come sunrise after that there race, you and Old Pizen'll be facin' a firing squad together."

Peter laughed and answered: "Not on your life. I'm acting under orders."

The volunteer trainer began operations. Manifestly Pizen was grateful toward him, but any endeavor to make a riding animal out of the beast was asking too much. After several near-catastrophes, Peter devised, and with the help of a saddler, made a special harness. Huge blinders were strapped over the mule's head so that he was virtually masked. A complicated network of leather straps bound him fore and aft. Only then was Peter able to vault into the saddle and maneuver the mule about to a limited extent.

As busy as the trainers was the racing committee, who spared nothing by way of fanfares and flourishes on the forthcoming mule derby. A program, featuring the distinguished ancestry of the entries, was drawn up and sent to the printer in Bismarck.

U. S. ARMY COURSE
Fort Abraham Lincoln

GREAT MULE RACE

One mile—or Any Fraction

1. General Custer enters Old Pizen, by Strychnine, out of Ground Glass; second dam, Hemlock, by Venomous, out of Prussic Acid. Age. older than Methuselah. Colors, scared pink.

2. Captain Tom Custer enters Hard Tack, by Commissary, out of Weevils; second dam, Polly Tix, by Gravy, out of Pocket. Age, old enough to know better. Colors, seasick green.

3. Captain Yates enters Carbine, by Breech Loader, out of Magazine; second dam, Misfire, by Kick-Back, out of Luck. Age, sweet sixteen. Colors, black and blue.

4. Lieutenant Moylan enters Break-Neck, by Runaway, out of Wouldn't Go; second dam, Bruises, by Contusion, out of Collision. Age, hoary. Colors, dipped.

5. Lieutenant Trelford enters Lethargic, by Tardy, out of A.W.O.L.; second dam, (not worth one). Age, (she's a lady and won't tell). Colors, ashen white.

So it ran through thirteen entries. More advance publicity was provided by industriously spread rumors which were printed in the paper. One item read:

ONE "SHERIDAN'S RIDE" ENOUGH

With feelings of deep regret we announce that Major General Phil Sheridan, commanding the Department of the West, will not ride in the Great Mule Race at Fort Abe Lincoln. This may be relied upon as positive. The General has paid his forfeit. He had bought him a little bob-tailed mouse-colored mule, and was training him like Sam Hill, when an idea struck him: to wit, that there were poets in Dakota Territory. Suppose, he thought with dismay, one of those fellows got off a poem entitled: "Sheridan's Mule Ride"! The dread possibility was more than he could contemplate, and, as aforesaid, he paid his forfeit. Thomas Buchanan Read's poem, "Sheridan's Ride," came near ruining him, the General says. Ever since that, people have been *riding* him. Thus we have it on the best authority that the Great Mule Race will be run "with Sheridan twenty miles away"—at least.

In the band barracks, a chorus of soldiers practiced every night with musical accompaniment to be ready to sound off before the race with a highly appropriate ditty: "Whoa, Mule, Whoa!"

THE day of the mule race, as the reporter for the Bismarck paper put it, dawned bright and clear. He also noted that a heavy rain the night before had raised the odds on good mud-mules by making the track heavy and—fortunately for the riders—softer.

Custer's return the night before had drawn no heartier cheers than his appearance today, clad in a ridiculous parody of racing silks. All the other officer-jockeys also had shed their dignity for quaint costumes. Troopers, solidly lining the course, yelled with delight, and free of the restraints of discipline, shouted jocular comments. The racket rose to a crescendo as trainers led up the indignant mounts, headed by Peter and Old Pizen, whose safety-first accouterments gave him the look of some fantastic beast that nobody could expect to see except after eating five Welsh rabbits and being afflicted with a very bad dream.

The glee club, seconded by the band, burst into "Whoa, Mule, Whoa!"

I went to see Miss Liza Jane,
To take her for a ride.
My ol' mule was so frisky,
He'd run awhile, then slide.

CHORUS

Whoa, mule whoa!
Whoa, mule, I say!
Just hop right in, Miss Liza,
And hold onto the sleigh.

I took Miss Liza to the parson's,
Miss Liza, you keep cool.
I sho' would like to kiss you,
But I's busy with this mule.

CHORUS

Whoa, mule, whoa!
Whoa, mule, I say!
If you get out, Miss Liza Jane,
It'll be our weddin' day.

When applause for the singers had died down, General Custer motioned the riders to gather around him.

"Gentleman," he announced, "you have all doubtless been training your mounts to the best of your ability in spite of the fact that you knew the winner would be the mule that came in last. As gentlemen riders, you will try to stay aboard and urge your steeds to their utmost speed, lose or not.

"But that is too much to ask. So the racing committee has established a new rule in the name of justice. Each rider will now step up to the Adjutant and draw lots. Everybody'll draw some other mule than his own to ride. Each jockey will thus prove his superb mulemanship on an unfamiliar mount, and do his best to bring the other fellow's mule in first and lose for him."

Shouts of delight echoed across the parade ground. They rose to a climax when Trelford drew Old Pizen.

The Lieutenant grinned as he said: "Something tells me the General didn't want to ride this old devil."

Custer grinned back. "On the contrary, I was looking forward to it, but I thought he wouldn't give me much sport with all this harness on him. Corporal Shannon, take off all those trappings. Mr. Trelford, I want you to have a real ride and bring him in first, even if it makes me lose. Pizen's practically blinded and hamstrung the way he is."

Amid howls of acclaim and protest, Peter dared step forward and say earnestly: "I beg the General's pardon, but honestly sir, that harness ought to stay on. Nobody can ride Pizen without it. He knows me, but he wouldn't let even me on his back unharnessed."

Custer shouted with laughter, but Trelford bent a caustic look on Peter. "Get all that truck off that mule, Shannon," he ordered.

Peter was certain that Trelford's look said as plainly as if he had spoken: "It doesn't prove a thing that *you* couldn't ride him unharnessed." The trumpeter flushed brick-red, clamped his lips shut, and stripped off the mule's protective harness. Old Pizen, blinders off, blinked, turned his head and regarded his trainer as if to say: "I only wore that stuff to please you. Glad to get it off. Much obliged."

Jockeys stood to mule. The starter's pistol cracked, and every officer vaulted onto the back of his mount. Indignant squeals and outraged braying filled the air. Mules dashes off in every direction except down the track. For Mrs. Custer, gripping the rail of the ladies' stand, the spectacle merged into a mêlée of flying hoofs, wildly switching shaved tails, splotches of fantastic racing silks, spurring legs and whacking whips. That good lady would have been distressed to learn that the troopers along the course were enthusiastically betting on the race, wagering up to a month's pay. They yelled themselves hoarse for their favorites.

"Go it, Old Curley! . . . Hooray for Yates! . . . Ride him, cowboy. . . . Kick him in the slats, Loot. You ain't half tryin'!"

It was the rank and file's day to howl without hindrance. Only once was any restraint clamped on. When an embittered soldier, with a grudge against an officer yelped, "Hope that mule kills you, you skunk!" a big first sergeant clamped a heavy hand on his shoulder and growled: "That's enough o' that, bucko."

Custer, Yates and several others had mastered their mounts and were galloping for the finish. Here and there silks flashed in the sun, as jockeys were bucked off. Some remounted; others hotly pursued their vagrant steeds. But most eyes were fixed on Old Pizen. Trelford had got aboard, and miraculously was still there. But Old Pizen stood stock-still on the starting line, ears aslant, an expression of utter amazement on his long face.

Trelford began to ply whip and spurs, and then Old Pizen came out of his trance. He shot into the air like a jumping-jack and hit the ground kicking. He revolved like a whirligig. He bucked like an outlaw bronco. His jockey gave a pretty exhibition of riding, but only for a few seconds. Then he was pitched so high into the air that he was half-stunned by his fall. Dazed, he began slowly picking himself up.

Old Pizen was by no means satisfied. He had been mortally insulted. A backward glance showed him an ideal target—his jockey on hands and knees. The mule took aim and cocked his mighty haunches for a lethal kick that would have crippled his enemy for life.

Peter dashed in with a plunging rush. His shoulder struck the mule on the flank. Barely deflected, the iron-shod heels whistled past their intended victim. Then Peter caught the angry animal by the bridle, soothing him. Jake Small and three troopers came to his aid.

Old Pizen's determined attempt at assault and battery had stolen the show. Spectators abandoned the race and converged from all quarters on the focus of excitement. Few noticed that Captain Yates' mule, Lieutenant McIntosh clinging ingloriously to his neck, had buck-jumped across the finish line last, winning the race.

The crowd watched the dazed Trelford stagger to his feet. He stood swaying for a minute or so while his head cleared. Comrades gathered around to see if he were hurt. He grinned slowly and denied it. Some pointed to Corporal Shannon, telling the Lieutenant what had happened. Trelford thrust through the group and unhesitatingly strode straight over to Peter.

"Corporal, I owe you an apology," he acknowledged, "and a lot more than that. If you hadn't shoved that mule off center, I'd have spent the next campaign in a hospital cot—or a pine box. I'll always be grateful. Will you shake my hand?"

Debonair despite his bedraggled silks, the Lieutenant offered his hand.

"Yes sir," said Peter, and exchanged handclasps. But his eyes and his voice were cold. True, this was a handsome apology. Yet it is not easy to accept amends from a rival.

Peter turned his back and led Old Pizen off to the stable.

Down at the corrals a consignment of remounts for the Seventh had arrived. They were strong, sturdy horses, averaging about four years old, and once they were conditioned, they would stand the long marches of the hard campaign to come, though many of them could not match the speed of the lighter Indian ponies. They were being assigned to various companies according to their color.

Several officers who needed chargers had hurried down. They were privileged to buy a horse from the Government at cost price, which amounted to about one hundred dollars. It was thus that Custer and Keogh had acquired their excellent mounts, Dandy and Comanche.

As one man the officers made a bee-line for a good-looking black gelding with a white blaze and four white stockings. The black was each one's first choice. A hot argument had resulted in an agreement to decide the matter by tossing a coin, when Burkman, Custer's horse orderly, hurried up and haltered the animal.



Let the soldiers come—the red man was unafraid.

"This one ain't in the market," Burkman declared.

"See here," a captain objected, "the General already has a fine string and—"

"The black's private-owned, sir," Burkman announced with finality, and led him off for grooming, followed by jealous glances.

Once more Corporal Shannon received a summons to the Custer quarters. "Friend of yours from the Fourth Cavalry, they say," the messenger imparted.

Major Lindsay, perhaps! Peter could not avoid paying his respects, although he did not care to return to the Fourth now. The Major probably had come up to escort his daughter Sally Ann back to their station.

No one was visible in front of the Custers' house as Peter arrived. But around the corner came a girl in a riding-habit leading a black horse, saddled and bridled, a black horse who tossed his fine head and stepped out proudly on his four white-stockinged feet.

Sally Ann and the horse suddenly halted. The black's small well-shaped ears pricked forward as he caught sight of the approaching soldier. He neighed long and joyously. Sally Ann loosed him.

Justin, the black Morgan, trotted straight to his old master. Peter's arms went around his neck, and he buried his face in the glossy mane.

Behind him a soft voice, trembling and a little uncertain, was saying:

"Peter dear, I couldn't help it. I had to send for Justin. I knew there wasn't any other way I could get you to speak to me again."

Time rolled back. The same scene had been played three years ago in Texas, with a boy and a girl facing each other beside this horse. Hands caressing a velvety gently-snorting muzzle met and clung. Ardent gray eyes lost themselves in shining brown ones.

A scurry, and a big dog thrust into the group. Bran and Justin rubbed noses, sniffing by way of introduction, while Peter and Sally Ann stood there, wordlessly happy.

"As striking a tableau as I've ever seen!"

It was Lieutenant Trelford's voice. No one had heard him stroll up.

"Hello, Miss Sally Ann. How are you, Corporal?" the intruder greeted. "Say, whose horse is that? A grand Morgan. I tried to buy him down at the corral, but Burkman said—"



Bran covered the last few yards in a terrific rush—launched himself on the neck of the renegade.

"He's Miss Lindsay's, sir."

"No," Sally Ann contradicted. "He's P— I mean, he's Corporal Shannon's."

"As a private mount, he couldn't be, could he?" Trelford questioned.

"She means I used to ride him in the Fourth, sir."

"But," Sally Ann began helplessly, "but I was going to give—"

"Oh." Trelford looked puzzled, then deeply thoughtful. "I see. You both used to ride this Morgan in the Fourth. Well, anyway, Shannon couldn't ride him now. The General mounts all his musicians on grays."

"But he must ride him. Peter, please, for my sake. Get on him. Can't you see Justin is longing for you to take him for a gallop?"

Peter could not resist the beseeching brown eyes. He swung into the saddle. How good it was to be on his beloved horse's back again! Justin snorted with pleasure and stamped a white forefoot.

"Go ahead, Corporal," Trelford urged. "You're off duty. As a matter of fact, I was just about to invite Miss Sally Ann riding. Here's my orderly with the horses."

Peter saluted and rode off. Sitting Justin back of the stables, he watched Sally Ann and Trelford riding off across the prairie. "Hang that fellow!" Peter muttered.

Chapter Fourteen

PAY DAY



A GALLOPING courier met a cavalcade returning to the post after a buffalo hunt. Along the column ran an electric thrill. No one needed to be told that the long-awaited orders had come at last. Custer and Cooke spurred back to Fort Abe, while the rest of the party pushed after them.

General Terry, commander of the entire expedition, already had arrived. A veteran leader in the struggle between the States, the tall, bearded general had seen no Indian-fighting, and he warmly greeted Custer, on whose experience he greatly relied. As the hunters reached the post, other troops assigned to compose the column with the Seventh Cavalry came marching in—sturdy infantry, guards for the wagon train: two companies of the Seventeenth, one of the Sixth, and a detail from the Twentieth, manning a platoon of three horse-drawn Gatling guns.

It was these pioneer machine guns, invented by Dr. Richard Jordan Gatling in 1861, which drew the fascinated interest of most of the cavalrymen on the post. Mounted on a small carriage, each boasted ten barrels, fed from a cartridge belt. A bearded gunner proudly showed them off to Peter and others crowding around.

"Somehow we never used 'em against the Rebs," the gunner said. "The Frenchies did in their scrap with the Prooshians a few years ago, but not enough—they got licked. All you do is turn this here crank and sweep her barrel from side to side. She shoots four hundred rounds a minute. Man, she mows 'em down like a scythe. Trouble is, all they give us to pull 'em is danged old plugs—condemned cavalry hosses."

"You'll be all right with the infantry, but how are you going to keep up with cavalry when we have to move fast?" Peter asked.

The gunner disgustedly spat a stream of tobacco juice. "*You* tell me, Corp," he suggested.

Peter was oppressed by an uneasy feeling of opportunity given and tossed away. What was a volley from single-shot carbines compared to a stream of lead from those three Gatlings—1200 shots a minute—against a mass of charging Sioux? And once on still another score he knew vague disquiet. That was when Custer's order came down that sabers would not be carried on this campaign. There was reason for it, of course. Swords were an encumbering extra weight; their rattling betrayed you to an alert enemy. Yet Peter well remembered how the *arme blanche* had stood him in good stead in the the Fourth's fights on the Staked Plains when his revolver was emptied and his carbine useless in a mêlée, with Comanches clutching at his bridle. The day of the saber

might be over, but it was good to have its hilt in your hand as a last resort. Custer, consistently, would leave behind his own trophy sword, its Damascus blade inscribed with the legend: *"Draw me not without cause. Sheathe me not without honor."*

Wagons loaded at the Quartermaster and Commissary storehouses. Officers and non-coms barked orders.

"D Company will draw ammunition at 4. One hundred rounds per man . . . First platoon, lead down to the blacksmith shop and get your nags shod . . . Oil up that leather. Want yer stirrup strap to break in charge, do you? . . . Get the saddler to pad that there saddle so it don't rest on that gall. If it turns into a sore, rookie, the Cap'n'll make you walk the hull campaign!"

All day long the trumpets blasted with brazen urgency. The crowded post throbbed with preparations. A detachment of Arikaree scouts under their chief Bloody Knife arrived and camped noisily. The dogs, certain of what was afoot, raced about excitedly or stationed themselves beside piles of equipment, determined not to be left behind. Most of the pack would be disappointed. Custer had instructed MacTavish that only five lucky ones would be allowed to accompany the column: Tuck, Swift, Lady, Kaiser and Bran.

Only toward Tattoo did the post quiet down, and it was then that Eliza sought out Corporal-Trumpeter Shannon.

"*She* want to see you," the cook announced.

"Mrs. Custer?" Peter questioned, hoping otherwise.

White teeth flashed in the smiling black face. "Young sojer, you knows better. Ain't Miss Libby. You come right along."

He found Sally Ann beside the Custer quarters. The meeting was distressingly public, with officers and orderlies hurrying by.

"Pete, dear," the girl said, "this isn't good-by. The General is going to let me ride out tomorrow with Mrs. Custer and Mrs. Calhoun along with the column as far as the first camp. I'll see you then. This is to ask you a great favor: I want you to ride Justin on this campaign. Leave that slow old Humpty in the stable."

"Sally Ann, sweetheart, I'd give anything if I had Justin under me. But you know the music has to ride grays. That's not just because it's a tradition and Custer's preference. He says that in action he has to be able to spot his trumpeters quick, and a gray or white horse stands out."

"Stands out for Indian sharpshooters too, Pete. Oh, you've just got to take Justin! You know that in a fight a good horse can mean the difference between life and death."

"I know, but I'll be all right. Sally Ann, three columns are converging on the Sioux. I swear the Seventh can lick 'em alone."

"You're riding Justin, Corporal Shannon, and that's an order. I'll get it from the General himself."

"Sally Ann, no! I can't let you bother him, with all he's got on him. You wouldn't either—you're an Army girl. No, my dearest."

"Oh, Peter!"

Tattoo sounded. Peter called, "See you tomorrow," and ran for the barracks.

MEN marching forth to war. It is a centuries-old spectacle, countless times repeated, yet never failing to stir pulses, to tug at heart-strings. Sally Ann as an Army girl had witnessed it often. Today it thrilled her as never before.

Whooping, the "Ree" scouts dashed off in the van, decked in barbaric finery. After them rode Custer's trusted civilian scout, the melancholy Charley Reynolds and the halfbreed scout and interpreter Mitch Bouyer, who knew the country ahead like the back of his hand. There strode the infantry with the Gatlings, bronze barrels gleaming in the sun. Beside the long wagon train rode the correspondent Mark Kellogg, astride a gray mule, though Sherman's orders expressly had forbade Custer taking a newspaper man. Boston Custer, a younger brother of the General, and Autie Reed, a nephew, helped herd the beef cattle. With the General, Captain Tom, and Lieutenant Calhoun, their brother-in-law, five members of the Custer family were taking the field.

Now to the blare of martial music, to the lilting strains of its own "Garryowen," paraded the Seventh in column of platoons. General Terry had ordered that it be last to leave its own post, to give the married men an opportunity to fall out, dismount and say farewell. A long, rippling current of Army blue, all twelve companies present, six hundred strong, and at its head Lieutenant Colonel, Brevet Major General George Armstrong Custer, gallantly debonair as always in campaign buckskin and sombrero, but this time with golden locks shorn close.

THE face of the commander of the Seventh gleamed with pride in the troops he headed. No bandbox soldiers, these. If any foreign observers had been present—super-military Germans, white-and-gold hussars of Austria, Britishers, smart in scarlet—they might have looked askance at these American cavalrymen. Campaign hats were jammed down on bronzed brows, bandanas knotted around necks. Their carbines were slung over loose blue tunics, and holstered revolvers swung at cartridge belts. The stripes of cavalry yellow along breeches of officers and non-coms disappeared into black, spurred boots. Overcoat, blanket roll, and other gear were strapped to the pommels and cantles of McClellan saddles, and saddle-bags bulked with rations and ammunition. Yet in all our wars there never has been such a dashing, picturesque figure as the rough-and-ready, hard-bitten trooper of the Indian campaigns.

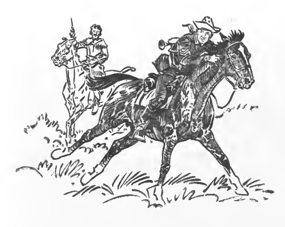
A casual glance would not have noted the flaws in this formidable array of fighting men: that the companies were below strength; that more than a third of the regiment was recruits, untested in battle; that only twenty-eight out of its complement of forty-one officers rode with it, reducing each outfit to one or two officers. All this Custer and the other veterans knew and, good soldiers, could only accept it.

Sally Ann's brown eyes swept the column, caught the yellow corporal's chevrons on the sleeve of a blue-clad trooper on the right of the front rank of massed trumpeters and clung. Trelford and other young officers saluted her as they rode past. She waved but hardly saw them. She was weeping like the other women around her when the band struck up "The Girl I Left Behind Me," but quickly dried her tears. She was one of the fortunate three who would be given one more glimpse. As the rear of the regiment cleared the post, she mounted Justin and joined Mrs. Custer and Maggie Calhoun, ready to overtake the column.

Then as the dust masked the departing regiment, the girl beheld a sight which would linger with her all her life. The clouds suddenly reflected a vivid, moving panorama, one of the rare mirages of the plains. It mirrored the procession of men and horses—the Seventh Cavalry streaming across the sky—flowing steadily on, swinging through illimitable space, riding on until the blue horsemen faded from view, as if the halls of Valhalla, that hereafter of warriors, had swallowed them forever. . . .

The three Army women, under the escort of the paymaster and his guard, soon overtook the column. Since the start had been made late in the day, it became necessary to halt for the night camp after only a short march.

"Guidons forward!" the trumpets sang. Guidon-bearers left their companies to ride ahead and form behind the color sergeant, carrying Custer's own guidon



Rick, on his fresh horse, would shoot him in the back.

of red and blue. The detail galloped briskly ahead. Where each company was to encamp, its guidon-bearer lifted his banneret from stirrup socket and thrust its pointed metal butt into the ground.

Rapidly the camp took form. Trumpeters sounded Pay Day, and each company lined up in turn at the table where the paymaster sat, his valise crammed with greenbacks. First sergeants called rolls, and company commanders checked the amount due. Many a trooper, saluting and taking his two-months' pay, left grumbling and griping. "Sure, and what's a man to do witb money out here? Feed it to thim prairie dogs?" It was by General Terry's order that payday had been postponed from yesterday. If paid on the post, too many soldiers would have squandered every dollar in drunken sprees in Bismarck, and the start of the march would have found the guardhouse crammed with sodden wrecks, unfit for duty.

Peter hurried away from the pay table to say good-by to Sally Ann, for the ladies were due to ride back to tbe post any minute now. Surely Sally Ann would make an opportunity, difficult though it would be for her to break away from the young officers and bid farewell to a trooper.

Nowhere could he find her. But yonder he sighted a vanishing little cloud of dust. The ladies had left.

He tbought he never had known such keenly bitter disappointment, such shattering disillusionment. He could face no one—he had to be alone. Head sunken on his chest, he wandered down to the comparative solitude of the Headquarters picket line. As be approached it, he halted abruptly. In the midst of the line of grays, a black hide stood out like a blot of ink on white paper.

Justin lifted his white-blazed forehead and nickered a welcome. There was a note fastened to his halter—a hasty scrawl from Sally Ann:

Pete, now you'll have to ride Justin. Mrs. Custer helped me; Scotty changed saddles, and I've taken Humpty. We had to rush off before the General found out. He didn't notice, he was having such a hard time saying good-by to Mrs. C. This is why I couldn't say good-by to you. Justin will bring you back safe to me, Pete dearest. All, all my love. Sally Ann.

Custer did notice the next morning after he had finished sending a detachment ahead on a scout. His eyes were cold as they scanned his corporal-trumpeter's black mount.

"What in Tophet are you doing on that horse, Corporal?" he barked. "Get your own mount at once."

"Couldn't find him, sir."

"Couldn't find him! Confound it, what do you mean by that?"

"No explanation, sir."

"Why—" Custer's scowl slowly dissolved into a grin. "I get it. Somebody left a changeling on the picket line. I might have expected it. That girl! That Army brat! "That's 'a horse of another color,' eh? Maybe it's better to have you mounted on a good horse than a white plug. Too late to do anything about it now. That girl counted on that. All right, Shannon, sound the General. We're moving out."

On marched the column, advance-, flank-, and rear-guards out. Long marches, forced marches—some thirty miles a day. Marches under sunny skies, through rain and mud, even a late snowstorm. Marches where Custer rode twice as far as any other, galloping up and down the column or far across the prairie, the staghounds bounding beside him.

As always, Custer's gallant figure, straight in the saddle as he swung across the prairie, fired Peter's imagination. Watching the General gallop toward the horizon, Peter told himself: "He doesn't belong here and now. He's ridden out of the past—out of feudal times, out of some medieval romance. Yonder astride his charger, his staghounds at his heels, and we, his men-at-arms, in his train, he ought to be leading a Crusade instead of an Indian campaign. We ought to be marching against Saracens, not the Sioux." It came to Peter suddenly that George Armstrong Custer was another Richard Cœur de Leon, with both the Lion-Hearted's virtues and his faults.

But battle seemed more unlikely every day. May dwindled into June, and still no signs of Indians. On pressed the column—the companies of matched bays, sorrels, blacks, chestnuts, grays, the foot-slogging infantry, the creaking wagon train. Still the trumpets began and closed the day. Tents rose and were struck. Campfires flared and died down. Horses and mules were watered, fed and picketed. Mess, the glow of pipes, tired troopers pillowing their heads on saddles. . . . Reveille and another march.

The Seventh hardened under the steady grind, but trouble developed within the column itself. And that trouble was mules—not the veteran jugheads hauling the wagons, but pack-mules.

Soon now the wagon train would have to be left behind with the infantry, while the cavalry pushed ahead. To catch the Sioux, the Seventh would have to move fast, and only led pack-mules, carrying the rations and ammunition, could keep up. Mules suitable for pack had been driven along with column, a whole braying, rambunctious herd of them, but the Seventh was sadly ignorant of their handling, a serious defect in its training. It had to learn as it marched.

Some mules could not be used for pack, at all. Affairs came to such a pass that substitutes had to be taken from the wagon mules. As a last resort, Old Pizen was taken out of his team, replaced and tried under pack.

Peter rashly volunteered to assist in the experiment. Jake Small, the teamster, regarded the trumpeter morosely and shook his head.

"Pete, won't you never learn?" he demanded. "You're like the first feller who ever fooled with gunpowder and touched a match to a mess of it for to see what'd happen. Man, man!"

Peter grinned and persisted. Jake had kept the mule-race harness and stowed it under his wagon seat. With the aid of that contrivance, Old Pizen was successfully packed, and proved an astonishing success. On his first trial march, Peter on Justin led the mule, jauntily carry-

ing two cases of ammunition. Cheers ran along the column as Peter moved ahead at a trot, with Old Pizen following docilely, not even tugging back at the lead-rope. Bran, plainly just as proud of the feat, capered along beside his long-eared friend. Peter glanced back fondly at them.

"Pizen, you old rapscallion, you," he said, "you keep cropping up all through my service, don't you? Can't I ever get rid of you?"

The mule flipped one ear toward him and snorted. Peter laughed. "Not yet, you say?"

Peter turned the mule over to the pack-master and returned to his duty as trumpeter. The column forged on. It pushed westward through the Bad Lands, crossed the Little Missouri, approached the Powder River. Peter began to notice that General Custer seemed strangely depressed—Custer, whom the prospect of action always exhilarated. A sense of foreboding began to grow on the trumpeter as he sat before the campfire that night. Bran rested his head on his master's knee and vainly begged for a pat.

Peter stared moodily toward Custer's tent, where the General's own red-and-blue flag with its silver crossed sabers snapped in the wind. A sudden gust, and the flag was blown down. Peter watched Lieutenant Godfrey, who was passing, stop to pick up the flag and drive its ferrule deep into the ground.

He shivered a little. It was foolishly superstitious of him, he knew, but he could not dismiss the thought that he had witnessed a bad omen.

However, before he fell asleep that night, Peter had thrown off his melancholy. The warmth of Bran, crouched beside him, was grateful, and he commenced to drowse. . . . An insistent, eerie sound dragged Peter back to consciousness. Bran was gone from his side. He raised himself on an elbow and listened. In the high wind it was faint yet unmistakable. The staghounds were howling.

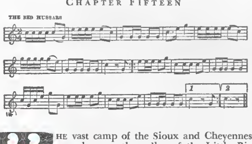
Peter threw off his blankets and walked toward the strange keening. Bran and the others, muzzles up, were gathered at Custer's tent.

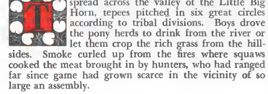
"Be still. Come awa'."

That was MacTavish's voice in the darkness. Peter helped him lead the dogs off and tie them.

"Wae!" Fergus whispered mournfully in his friend's ear. " 'Tis a fule notion to some, nae doot, but there's nae Scot but kens that staghounds hae second sight. Aye, their eyes see what mon canna. And Peter, they howl when they sight the Death Angel."

CHAPTER FIFTEEN





THE vast camp of the Sioux and Cheyennes spread across the valley of the Little Big Horn, tepees pitched in six great circles according to tribal divisions. Boys drove the pony herds to drink from the river or let them crop the rich grass from the hillsides. Smoke curled up from the fires where squaws cooked the meat brought in by hunters, who had ranged far since game had grown scarce in the vicinity of so large an assembly.

Here was massed the might of the Sioux nation and the Northern Cheyennes—from ten to twelve thousand men, women and children, from which the war chiefs had mustered nearly three thousand warriors. Here ruled wily old Sitting Bull, chief of the Hunkpapa Sioux, making medicine and bestowing gifts. And here the valiant war chiefs Crazy Horse and Gall and Crow King and Rain-in-the-Face led the scalp dances and welcomed new recruits streaming in from the reservations. Here was savage strength unprecedented, unsuspected by the paleface. Let the soldiers come—the red man was unafraid.

ALREADY Crazy Horse had dealt with one blue column. He had shattered General Crook's advance guard, then struck his main body at the Rosebud, fought him to a standstill and forced the renowned Gray Fox to retreat to his base. There had been brushes with Gibbon's troops too, and the scalps of soldiers hung drying in the sun. Custer with a third column was coming on, but even the dreaded Yellow Hair now left the Sioux undaunted.

Through the camp moved a single white man. Although he had stained his skin and dressed as an Indian, there was no mistaking his Caucasian features, and through vanity he had not dyed his auburn hair. A bodyguard of two braves accompanied him to identify him as a friend in the event of a meeting with strange warriors. Otherwise he walked free, and in his tepee he was waited on by two young squaws who had replaced the white woman, a settler's daughter, he had discarded some months ago.

Former Corporal Rick, deserter from the Fourth Cavalry, was well satisfied with himself. Never had he heard of another white man who was admitted as he was to the high councils of the Sioux. Small wonder they held him in esteem. They owed many of their rifles and much ammunition to this shrewd, unscrupulous trader who had connections with every crooked Indian agent and storekeeper in the territory. As a one-time cavalryman he was able to give valuable advice to the Indians on the probable tactics of their enemies. For Crazy Horse, Rick had more than once interpreted news brought in by scouts. The hostiles were far better informed on the three Army columns in the field against them than were any of the generals from Terry down on the strength and movements of the Sioux.

Striding toward the lodge of Sitting Bull, Rick carried himself with the arrogance his position permitted, but his eyes were wary and calculating as always. Confident as he was of an Indian victory in the forthcoming battles, he was too astute not to foresee the inevitable aftermath. No matter how great the triumph, this great concourse would melt away, some tribesmen returning to the reservations, others riding over the border into Canada.

That would be Rick's own route of escape when the time came—Canada. Across the line, he would go white again. Everything was prepared there. In several banks he had sizable deposits. Selling arms to the Indians was highly profitable, and other deals of his since he had skipped out from the Fourth and gone "over the hill" had proved no less so. Everything he touched had brought him in money. His luck had run strong at the gambling tables of the mining camps. And that had been a real haul he made that night in the Black Hills when he waylaid a prospector who had struck it rich, murdered him in his sleep and appropriated a fat sack of gold nuggets.

Joining the Sioux in the fight ahead would be his last exploit, the renegade assured himself. Having entered the camp, he could not safely leave until after the battle. He was perfectly aware of the risk to which he had committed himself and knew it for a needless one. Yet he had been unable to forego a part in the shattering

defeat he confidently expected would be the fate of the Army he hated.[8]

His lips curled back from his teeth as, answering a summons, he entered the lodge of Sitting Bull wbere the cbiefs sat in council.

RICK took his place in the circle. The wrinkled copper visages of the old chiefs and the eagle fierce faces of the war chiefs turned toward him. They questioned him about Custer, and there was awe and respect in their voices when they spoke of the formidable Yellow Hair.

Rick sneered. Why were his red brothers so troubled about Custer? He was only another soldier who could be tricked and beaten by the bold and resolute. Why he, Rick himself, had fooled Yellow Hair and slipped out of his hands one day in White Wolf's lodge.

Would Custer fight, they asked.

Rick answered confidently. Certainly Custer would fight. His reputation was at stake. But did not the Sioux outnumber him five to one? And let the chiefs remember Yellow Hair's favorite tactic—that which he had used at the Washita and elsewhere: his custom of dividing his command before he attacked. Let the chiefs strike each column separately and crush it as they had Crook.

Grunts of approval ran around the circle. Then the chiefs demanded: "Get us more guns."

That now was impossible, Rick declared. He stared them boldly in the eye and said: "Let my brothers take them from dead soldiers."

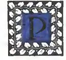
As the council prepared to adjourn, Rick rose and spoke once more.

"One small favor, my brothers: If any warrior takes alive one of the trumpeters of the soldiers—one of tbose who blows a horn—let him be given into my hands. There is a certain one who is my enemy. Let me deal with him."

Sitting Bull nodded assent. "Let it be done."

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

OFFICERS' CALL



ETER stood and ground his teetb at an order which had come down from Headquarters, as countless soldiers have done over countless orders in every army in history.

Toward mid-June the Seventh had made camp at the confluence of the Powder and Yellowstone rivers. This, orders stated, would be the column's base. The wagon train would remain here under guard, with pack-mules taking over the transport. Even the band was to be left, while the regiment it was wont to play into action marched on. Those steps, Peter conceded, were necessary in a fast-moving campaign. It was the command, verbally given MacTavish, that tried the trumpeter's soul. The staghounds must remain in camp also.

Whether the decision to leave the hounds behind was Custer's or General Terry's, Peter did not know. Of course, it was true that dogs were no longer used in warfare. The time was long past when the Romans launched their savage Molossian hounds, trained to attack, on barbarian hordes, or when dogs in armor followed the Crusaders and joined them in battle to wrest the Holy Land from the infidel. On this continent—so Peter's father had written him wben he first learned about Bran—Cortez and the Conquistadores had sent their fierce greyhounds into the fray against the Aztec Indians, but that was three and a half centuries ago. Today letting loose the dogs of war was just a line you read in Shakespeare.

It was no easy parting. When MacTavish, furious that he must stay behind in charge of the hounds, was tying them securely to wagon wheels, Peter said his farewell to Bran. The tawny staghound reared himself up on his hindlegs and placed his forepaws on his master's shoulders. So large now that, erect, he could almost look level into Peter's face, the great hound, understanding what was in the air, pleaded eloquently with his eyes.

The trumpeter put his arms around Bran's shaggy neck and laid his head against the hound's.

"No, Bran, I can't," he answered in a voice he strove to keep from breaking. "Wait here for me. I'll be back."

Trumpets called; companies swung up into their saddles, and the Seventh rode on. . . .

MacTavish, wise in the ways of his charges, did not release the dogs all that day nor even when night fell, but returned to the wagons from time to time to make ctrtain that they were still well secured. In the morning he was up early to feed them. Four staghounds greeted him with wagging tails. Where the fifth had been tied remained only a tough halter rope, gnawed in two. Bran was gone.

THE game of hide-and-seek the Seventh was playing with the Sioux was growing hot. Major Reno, who had been sent on a scout with his battalion, returned and reported that he had discovered a broad Indian trail leading toward the valley of the Little Big Horn. Only a large assemblage could have marked the prairie with so many travois ruts and imprinted such numerous hoofmarks. Surely a band of tbat size would stand and fight; in any event, it would find escape to be much more difficult.

But Reno had missed a vital piece of information. Not forty miles from where he rode, those same Indians had struck and repulsed General Crook. This highly important news would not be learned until days later, and failure of the three Army columns in the field to keep in touch laid them open to disaster. The brilliant Chief Crazy Horse already had taken advantage of that isolation to hurl Crook back, and now was biding his time to catch another blue force alone and shatter it.

General Terry, after receiving Reno's report of an Indian concentration, led the Seventh Cavalry onward to the junction of the Yellowstone and Rosebud rivers. There, at any rate, the plan of campaign worked as scheduled, for General Gibbon and his troops had arrived at that designated rendezvous, and two of the Army columns met.

Terry called his subordinate commanders, Custer and Gibbon, aboard the supply ship, *Far West*, and issued final orders. They were to march, separately, on the valley of the Little Big Horn—he, Terry, remaining with Gibbon and leaving the more experienced Indian-fighter, Custer, on his own. Reaching the valley, where by every indication they would find the enemy encamped, the two blue columns were to close in and crush the Indians between the jaws of pincers in smashing attacks. . . .

The Seventh was mounting up to ride toward battle. Yonder Generals Terry and Gibbon sat their saddles to review the march past. The wind flaunted the bright folds of the regimental standard, and Custer's own guidon of red, blue and silver, staffs grasped firmly by color sergeants. Wbat if the band was not present to play the regiment by with "Garryowen?" Peter and the other trumpeters, massed, raised their instruments to their lips and blew a stirring pæan. Company after company, scouts, pack-train, streamed by. Custer, eyes bright with pride, turned out to salute the reviewing officers.



"Come on!" Peter yelled and sprinted for the water, as bullets kicked up dust around the runners.

Good-by and good luck, they bade him. And Gibbon called out:

"Now, Custer, don't be greedy, but wait for us."

The dashing figure in buckskin wheeled his horse, waved and shouted back: "No, I won't."

You could, thought Peter, take that two ways.

THE gait of the black Morgan was smooth as always. Justin's hoofs, thudding on the prairie, merged in that rhythmic tattoo which is drummed by a cavalry regiment at the trot. A trooper was fortunate to have such a grand horse under him, Peter reminded himself for the hundredth time. He felt the reassuring weight of his carbine, revolver and slung trumpet, and knew himself to be better than competent in handling these tools of the soldier's trade.

Action ahead—no question of it now. Peter felt the same old tingling of the spine, and his palms were clammy. Veteran though he was, he knew it would always be the same. Some few men faced battle stolidly, some with fierce exhilaration, most with inner dread. Peter knew he was numbered among the last. He remembered a passage from the Book of Judges his father had recited to him. How Gideon was about to lead a host against the Midianites when the Lord spoke to him, saying: "The people that are with thee are too many to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me. Now therefore go to, proclaim in the ears of the people, saying, Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from Mount Gilead. And there returned of the people twenty and two thousand; and there remained ten thousand."

John Shannon had grinned and remarked: "Pete, you can bet that practically all of the ten thousand who remained were scared too, and just wouldn't admit it. That's the way it is when you go into a scrap. Never be ashamed of being afraid, son. We all have been. You'll find courage within you when you need it."

Peter in past battles had found that courage, and believed he would again.

Uplifted arms signaled a sudden halt. The regiment had struck the half-mile-wide trail of an Indian village on the march, the trail reported by Major Reno. Hard and fast it rode ahead—three days of forced marches—following that trail. Now, scouts declared, the path led beyond doubt into the valley of the Little Big Horn.

Custer stood at the crossroads of his career, a vital decision before him. Should he turn aside from the trail and wait for Gibbon, as his orders required, and perhaps allow the Indians to escape? Or should he thrust ahead? Yonder beckoned opportunity, opportunity for a great victory which would belong to Custer and the Seventh alone, a triumph which would burnish bright again honor and glory won so often in the past. For a commander who struck and conquered, disregarded orders were forgotten.

Peter would always remember the sweeping gesture which marked Custer's decision. The buckskin-clad arm shot up, swept forward and down. "Forward, ho!" And the Seventh rode straight along that broad trail toward the valley.

A night march on June 24th brought the regiment close to the divide separating the Rosebud and Little Big Horn rivers. At dawn, scouts called Custer to the crest. Many Indians down there in the valley, they warned him—too many. The General's keen eyesight, aided by field glasses, could not confirm what the scouts reported. He knew only that hostiles had been sighted in his rear, proof that the Indians were aware of his arrival. For Yellow Hair it was now or never. Strike now, or let the Indians escape.

George Armstrong Custer was never a man to draw back from a fight. All his depression vanished, he summoned his officers for battle orders. They heard his second fateful decision: to divide his force. Five companies would follow him, three Reno, and three Benteen, with the twelfth detailed to guard the pack-train. Just as at the Washita, they would charge the Indian camp from three sides.

Intently, Peter watched the battalions form. Into the column behind the General rode the companies he had picked, the companies of his favorite commanders: Tom Custer's troopers, Keogh's, Yates', Smith's, Calhoun's. Well, the choice was Custer's right. His young brother Boston, his nephew, and Correspondent Kellogg joined them. Then Peter heard his own name called by Lieutenant Cooke.

"Shannon, it's not your turn on the roster today," the Adjutant said. "Voss is up, but his English is none

For an incredible twenty minutes the chase continued: Peter, mounted bareback, racing after the long-eared recreant carrying the ammunition.

too good. The General wants you. You'll serve as his trumpeter today."

"Right, sir." Peter grinned and trotted Justin over to his post behind Custer.

Forward! Beat of hoofs on the prairie and jangling accoutrements. Down into the valley, cut by a river and deep gullies, rode the Seventh Cavalry. Its three columns swung wide apart and disappeared from each other's view.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

COMMENCE FIRING



AJOR RENO and his men splashed through a ford to the west bank of the Little Big Horn River, ranks crowding up on each other when thirsty horses could not be denied a drink. Impatiently, troopers jerked up the heads of dripping, snorting mounts, and the column threaded through a gloomy defile. As it emerged, the great Indian village in the valley spread before startled eyes. And in front of it, seeming to sprout from the very ground like sown dragon-teeth, sprang up a whooping, shooting horde of Sioux and Cheyennes.

One look, and Reno sent a galloper, then another to find Custer who had promised to support him "with the whole outfit." Neither rider ever would be seen again.

Then the Major rose in his stirrups and shouted: "Left front into line. Gallop. Guide right." Fours swung abreast, and the blue array thundered down on the red—one hundred twelve men charging thousands.

The frantic horses of three troopers took their bits in their teeth and dashed ahead, straight into the Indian mass. It swallowed up one rider without a trace. Miraculously the other two ran that deadly gantlet, got their mounts under control and, bleeding from wounds, rejoined the battalion. But now the tossing red sea threatened to engulf the entire command. It broke over the left flank, smashed the Ree scouts back on the center, swept around the rear.

Reno flung up one blue arm. "Halt. Prepare to fight on foot. Dismount."

Now weary months of drill proved their worth. In mid-career the charge slithered to a dust-shrouded halt. Troopers swung out of their saddles, steady horse-holders linked their mounts and trotted back. Carbines of the firing line blasted the surging assault. Blazing away, the battalion advanced a little, then recoiled. Those tremendous odds were not to be withstood. The blue fusillade slackened as cartridges jammed in overheated breeches, and grim troopers pried them out with knives. Oh, for even one of the Gatling guns now!

Backward ebbed the bending line, leaving blue heaps stranded on the prairie, back toward a strip of timber. There, perhaps, it could make a stand. Through the trees, troopers, glancing over their shoulders as they loaded, saw the river they had recently crossed. The water, glistening in the glare of the noonday sun, was an obstacle to further retreat, one to be passed only at deadly cost.

Copper bodies loomed through the smoke of battle—screeching warriors rushing forward. Whistling arrows and bullets buzzing like wasps whipped and scourged the retreat. A trooper groaned, "Oh, God, I've got it!" and rolled over lifeless. Others tottered and dropped. Even the timber, now gained, furnished pitifully little shelter. The Indian scout Bloody Knife had just taken post by Reno's side when suddenly his brains were spattered over the officer.

It takes a stanch man to hold steady when another's brains are splashed over him. The Major, unnerved, yelled an order to fall back. Only the nearest company

heard him and mounted up. Other troopers on the firing line looked around and began to follow suit. Reno did not stay to organize a rear guard, but pistol in hand, galloped back to the river through red men thronging to close off the avenue of escape.

The retreat disintegrated into a disorderly rout. A lieutenant and a group of troopers were cut off and abandoned in the woods. Indian fire emptied saddle after saddle. The battle broke up into hand-to-hand single combats, soldier against warrior. Red horsemen thrust in from all sides, grappled with galloping cavalrymen, dragged them from their mounts. One private, his horse killed by a howling Sioux, struggled to his feet and shot his adversary. As the brave fell, the trooper caught his pony, vaulted onto its back and won his way clear.

A few heroic men tried to stem the red torrent. The fine old scout Charley Reynolds faced it, rifle cracking, till it swept over him. Lieutenant McIntosh, commanding the rearmost company, kept rallying his troopers up to the moment that Sioux bullets riddled him. Dripping knives and tomahawks hacked his body to pieces because of his Indian blood. There galloped young Lieutenant Varnum through the turmoil, striving to head off the panicky flight, begging men to stand and save their comrades. Major Reno snapped at him, "I'm in command here!" and led the rout on to the river.

No time to reach the ford, farther downstream now. Cavalrymen spurred wild-eyed horses over the brink of a five-foot bank into the river. On through it dashed the foremost, and scrambled up the slopes of a hill beyond. On their heels, more men and horses plunged into the reddening waters. Lieutenant Hodgson's charger was hit and sank. He grabbed a trooper's stirrup and was pulled through, but as he gained the farther bank, an Indian bullet killed him.

On the hill beyond the river, the breathless, battered battalion made a stand at last, counting its losses. Three officers and twenty-nine troopers and scouts were dead, seven wounded, and fifteen missing.

Custer, at the head of his five companies, forged onward at a pounding gallop. Peter Shannon, riding to his left rear, could read the exhilaration of approaching battle, the promise of victory, in the very set of those buckskin shoulders. The cavalcade surged up a ridge and reined in to an abrupt halt.

Down in the valley before them, just beyond the river, lay the vast village. It was almost empty. Only squaws and children, catching sight of the cavalry on the bluffs, scurrried about in alarm. The mass of the warriors had been drawn off to battle Reno when he charged toward the farther end of the village. Here beckoned golden opportunity. Custer's luck!

The General's eagle eyes swept the horizon. Nowhere was either of the other two blue columns in view. One of Tom Custer's sergeants was called out of ranks and sent racing back to find Benteen, with orders to bring up the pack-train and its ammunition at once. Downswung arms signaled forward. Bays, sorrels and grays, still blowing, responded to gripping knees. Troopers' hands felt for the flap of revolver holsters. Only a little farther; and a thundering charge could sweep through the Indian village like a spring freshet.

The old familiar dryness parched Peter's throat, and his stomach muscles were taut. A gesture from Custer suddenly wrenched him from his abstraction, and he trotted forward. The General was speaking to Adjutant Cooke.

"Sergeant Kanipe might miss Benteen. We'll play it safe. All right, Shannon, I'm sending you too. Your mount's in good shape. Get back to Benteen and tell him to bring up that ammunition in a hurry. Ride hard!"

Saluting, Peter was whirling Justin when Cooke called: "Wait! Good adjutants put orders on paper—then there can be no mistake." Hastily Cooke scribbled:

Benteen. Come on. Big village. Be quick. Bring packs.

The trumpeter snatched the message. A rapid flurry of hoofbeats, and he was off, bent low over his mount's neck. Not until two days later would he realize that the paper he clutched was his own reprieve from death.

In the steady rhythm of Justin's gallop was comfort and reassurance, but anxiety tore at Peter's heart. He knew the general direction, yet Benteen had been in motion and his whereabouts was uncertain. The ridges and ravines of the valley of the Little Big Horn masked Peter's view like a blindfold. There was no time to ride up on a hill and look around. He could only trust the bearings he had been foresighted enough to take. He told himself: *I can't fail.* Patting Justin's lathering neck, he plunged into a long ravine.

As he rode on, three Indians entered the farther end of the ravine, blocking his path.

Immediately they whooped and rode swiftly toward him. It was too late to pull up, swing around and retreat. The warriors would sweep down on his back. Peter tugged his revolver out of its holster and dug unaccustomed spurs into Justin's flanks. The black Morgan spurted forward.

Disobeying gestures of their leader, two of the braves galloped against Peter. The third pulled up to wait in the exit, making sure, ready for the cavalryman on the chance that he might fight his way through his first assailants.

The onrushing pair drew apart to converge on their victim, right and left. One brandished a war-club. The other, armed with a rifle, fired as he rode. As the bullet whistled past his cheek, Peter leveled his Colt, making himself hold his fire. At thirty yards he put three rounds into the rifleman, saw him fling up his arms and topple backward over his pony's rump.

But now the other warrior was upon him. Reining Justin in, Peter barely avoided a crushing impact from the charging pony. Justin, his stride broken, stumbled but recovered. The agile Indian pony kept his feet also, and his rider spun him around and charged again. Peter's revolver blazed thrice. He saw all three bullets thud into the painted chest; yet the Sioux still retained the strength to smash at him with his war-club. It struck Peter's right shoulder a glancing blow, but its wielder, following its downward sweep, slid to the ground, dead.

Peter, his fingers numb, dropped his empty Colt. He saw the remaining warrior trotting slowly toward him, and grasped the strap to unsling his carbine. Groaning, he found he could not raise his right arm. While he strove to reach the carbine with his left, his knees signaled Justin for a dash. His chance of getting past was slim, but he must take it—he must get through to Benteen.

Then suddenly he recognized the third warrior. Despite the warpaint on the stained skin, he could not doubt those features he knew so well. It was Rick.

Rick recognized him in the same instant. His teeth bared in the old wolfish smile. He covered his enemy with his revolver, but still did not shoot, relishing this long-awaited moment. Peter took advantage of the respite and spurred Justin off to the flank to pass him. But the other was ready for him there. He kicked the strong pinto he was riding straight across the path, so that Peter had to pull his horse back on his haunches. Quickly the trumpeter tried the other side, and again Rick neatly blocked him. Nothing could have delighted the renegade more than this cat-and-mouse game. He had his foe, revolver gone, obviously unable to unsling his carbine, at his mercy.

As Peter circled back for another try, Rick raised his revolver. His eyes showed that he had enjoyed enough sport and was going to end it. Peter set himself to duck, though he knew that a crack shot like Rick could scarcely miss. The gun banged, echoing against the walls of the ravine.

Unbelievably, Rick did miss. Anticipation of his triumph, the very fervor of his hatred, had spoiled his aim.

Peter drove Justin forward in a last desperate dash. Neither man had seen the shape that stood silhouetted against the sky for a moment on one wall of the ravine, nor did they still notice when it came swiftly slithering down, leaping toward them in great bounds.

How Bran had found his way to the valley from the distant Powder River base, no man could say. Other dogs have made journeys as far and farther in search of their masters—guided by a mysterious canine instinct, driven by incomparable devotion. Now that Bran had come, he knew his duty. Yonder he had seen what appeared to be a painted Indian trying to kill his master. Long-enduring strength, bred into staghounds for centuries, revived in the animal's weary sinews, as his tawny body flashed forward.

Peter had managed to skirt his enemy and was in the clear. Behind him he heard thundering hoofs. Rick on his fresh horse could not help but overtake him, and would shoot him in the back. Perhaps when he was hit he could hang on somehow and get through to Benteen. He spoke to Justin, begging him for his utmost speed, and the black Morgan valiantly gave it.

Rick, galloping hard, waited for a sure shot—waited a little too long. Bran covered the last few yards in a terrific rush, launched himself upward in a mighty leap, and clamped his jaws on the neck of the renegade.

Looking back, Peter saw the deserter reeling under that ferocious attack, yet even as he fell, firing shot after shot into the tawny hide. His last glimpse as he rode out of the ravine showed him Rick prone on the prairie, his throat torn out, and beside him the still body of the gallant staghound.

Corporal-Trumpeter Shannon, Seventh U. S. Cavalry, galloped on, tears streaming from his eyes. And in his head rang the words of Custer that day Bran had been brought to the hospital, and the General spoke for the dog.

"Soldier, he's saying, 'Master, you saved my life, and I'll guard yours with mine as long as we both shall live.' "

Captain Benteen and his column were advancing at a trot when Peter sighted them and galloped up to deliver his dispatch. The officer read it as he rode.

"Right," he said. "I got the first message. Been trying to find the General. Confounded country's cut up so bad with gullies, I can't get sight of him. Lead on, Corporal."

Benteen's shrewd glance scanned the soldier beside him.

"You and your horse both look as if you've had hard going, Shannon. What happened?"

"Ran into three Indians in a ravine, sir. Had to ride through 'em. But we're all right." This was not the time to tell of the death of Rick and Bran.

"Was the General in action when you left?"

"Not yet, sir. He was just about to strike the village. It's a big one, but it was almost empty. He'll charge right through it and hit the Indians at the other end or wherever they are."

"Good." Benteen was about to command, "Gallop," when several of his Indian scouts dashed up, gesticulating. From the direction in which they pointed, a breeze faintly carried the sound of firing.

Benteen obeyed the maxim of Napoleon and marched to the sound of the guns. It led him not toward Custer but to the hill where Reno's routed troops were making their stand.

Chapter Eighteen

(27) CEASE FIRING



Custer, once he had dispatched his second courier—Corporal-Trumpeter Shannon—paused a moment to scan the big Indian village across the river with gleaming blue eyes. What could balk him now? Surely, Benteen would gallop up with the pack-train before long. Even now Reno must be riding to attack the farther end of the village. Exultant, the General gripped the sides of his favorite charger, Vic, and led his five companies toward the river, where a ford offered easy passage.

A few mounted Sioux bobbed up in front, wheeled their ponies and cut off at a tangent, riding for dear life. The General let them go. But from a ridge to his flank, rifle-fire crackled.

Halt! Custer, with victory seemingly in his grasp, was cautious for once, suspecting an ambush. Dismounted skirmishers pushed up the slope to clear the way.

On the crest, four Cheyennes—four brave men alone—blazed away at the advancing cavalrymen. One trooper fell to their fire. For a little while the warriors held up the attack, then turned and fled. Short as the time was, it proved to be one of those fatal delays that alter the fortunes of battles. Racing messengers had reached and warned Chief Crazy Horse. Scarcely had Custer mounted his men again, when up the valley swept the tumultuous red hordes, yelping in triumph from Reno's bloody repulse.

On they came, galloping madly, all the furious Sioux and Cheyennes. They poured in through the gullies, swooping down on Custer's flanks, menacing his front, shrieking war-whoops, loosing a stream of lead and arrows.

Steady, the Seventh! In the face of those heavy odds, Custer ordered a retreat toward a hill. One company dismounted, then a second. Smoking carbines held off red charges, while the balance of the battalion climbed the slopes.

"Too many Indians." They came cascading in through the ravines, enveloping the cavalrymen. Rifles of hidden savages spat down from the ridges. Troopers gasped and died. Wounded horses screamed in agony. Ammunition was dwindling fast. And still Benteen did not come.

Red charges wiped out the remnant of Keogh's company, then Calhoun's. Smith's gray-horse company was rushed and smothered. Higher up the slopes, surviving troopers led their mounts into a semicircle to form a barricade and shot them. For a time they fired over the carcasses. They did not last long.

Wild, yelling warriors converged on Custer and the few beside him, making their last stand near the summit of the hill. On the lower slope, war-clubs rose and struck, smashing in the skulls of prostrate figures in blue. Crazy Horse and Gall and Rain-in-the-Face waved their braves on for the final rush.

Perhaps—no white man lived to tell the tale—Custer at the end stood alone near the knoll. Certainly, tall and soldierly, utterly fearless as always, he fought to the last, his revolvers blazing, until bullets pierced his head and side and he fell.

It was all over in one brief, desperate hour. On the battlefield of the Little Big Horn, Custer lay slain; and about him, like a feudal chieftain, were strewn the bodies of his kinsmen, his captains and his men-at-arms.



"Too many Indians!" They came cascading in through the ravines, enveloping the cavalrymen. Red charges wiped out the remnant of Keogh's company, then Calhoun's. Yelling warriors converged on surviving troopers

CHANCE, haphazard as a flipped coin, had directed Benteen to Reno instead of to Custer. Through many years after the Battle of the Little Big Horn, men would speculate on that disastrous defeat and wonder what might have happened had Benteen joined Custer. In all likelihood, both battalions would have been wiped out by the onrush of the Indians upon that stricken field.

Undoubtedly Benteen's arrival saved Reno—that and the fact that Crazy Horse had drawn off the bulk of his warriors to attack Custer. Reno's casualties were heavy, his ammunition dangerously scarce. The troopers with Benteen quickly divided up their cartridges with their comrades, and soon a plentiful supply was assured, as the lagging pack-train trotted up. Peter was glad to catch sight of Old Pizen, grotesque in his harness, in the line of mules.

Feverishly the two battalions began entrenching themselves on the hill, a good defensive position. Wounded men, the horses, and the mules were placed in a hollow, which offered a certain amount of protection from Indian bullets. From the timber across the river and other points surrounding the besieged, warriors, left by Crazy Horse to hold Reno in check while he dealt with Custer, kept up a harassing fire.

Benteen's bushy white brows lowered as he watched his senior, Reno. The dark major, wrought up almost beyond control, was banging away with his revolver at Indians a thousand yards away. Before him, as the aftermath of his behavior on this bloody day, stretched bitter, sinister years. A court-martial would acquit him of charges of cowardice, based on his rout, but he would in later years be tried twice for conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman; and finally, he would be dismissed from the Army.

At once Captain Benteen took over command in all but name. It was he who became the bulwark of a defense, soon to wax desperate. Every officer, every trooper, was anxiously demanding: Where is Custer? The two couriers, Kanipe and Shannon, told where they had left him. And now, far up the valley, they heard heavy firing. Three crashing volleys punctuated it. That must be Custer in action.

Angry mutterings spread through the troops on the hill. "That's Custer. . . . Let's get moving. . . . Got to get to him."

Reno stood hesitant, undecisive. Captain Weir started off with his company, not waiting for orders. Reluctantly, prodded by Benteen, Reno gave the command to follow. Since they could not leave the wounded, comrades laid the bandaged men on blankets, with six troopers grasping the edges of each. They moved out at a snail's pace.

Too slow, perforce, and too late. Before the column had advanced far, the mass of the Sioux and Cheyennes came galloping back in fierce, victorious frenzy from the annihilation of Custer and his men. Warriors by the hundreds swooped down on the advancing Weir, smashed him back on the column. Only a gallant rearguard action under Lieutenants Godfrey and Hare kept the retreat from becoming a second rout.

Back on the hill once more, cavalrymen of the Seventh fought for their lives. On through the day, a grim day that seemed to have no end, carbines spat from trenches around the slopes. An answering hail of Indian bullets poured in from the woods and higher ground. The war chiefs knew no lack of guns and ammunition now—Cus-

ter's dead had armed them. Troopers, one after another, slumped in their rifle pits, lay still or called feebly for first aid. Casualties rose alarmingly—eighteen killed, forty-three wounded.

Blessed dusk at last. In the hollow, the wounded moaned for water. Thirsty troopers on the firing line rolled pebbles in their mouths. Most canteens had long since run dry, and there was no place to refill them except the river yonder, and from its bank Indian sharpshooters, concealed in the woods, maintained a fire that seldom slackened.

Water they must have. The risk loomed large, but it must be taken, taken while there was still light enough for carbines on the hill to cover a dash to the river. Benteen called for volunteers from the group around him.

Peter said to himself: *Somebody has to go.* He stepped forward. At his side he found Lieutenant Trelford, and just behind him Jim Galt, his old friend from first days at Fort Abe, and four others.

"Not you, Trelford," Benteen refused. "I can't spare an officer. Nor you, Galt—not with that game leg. Shannon, your shoulder limbered up? All right. You and the rest. Pick up all the canteens you can carry. Creep down that ravine. At the end, run to the river for all you're worth. We'll cover you with everything we've got. Good luck."

Peter and the other volunteers, loaded with canteens, moved down through the ravine. Hearts pounded faster as they reached its outlet, and the deadly open space stretched before them.

"Come on!" Peter yelled and sprinted for the water.

Bullets kicked up dust around the runners. Over their heads whistled lead from the covering carbines of the Seventh. They threw themselves flat on the river bank, submerged the canteens they clutched in the water. Bubbling and gurgling, the canteens took an eternity to fill. At last stoppers were pushed in. Carriers jumped to their feet and dashed for the ravine, dodging from side to side. Every blow on their spines of their jangling loads seemed the prelude to a smashing Indian bullet.

Panting, they staggered into the safety of the gully and delivered their precious burdens. "Well done," came Benteen's praise. Peter and the other volunteers, breathing hard, knowing they were lucky to have made it unhit, returned to their places in the thin, extended firing line.

All that night the defenders of the hill fought on. Indians seldom attacked in the dark, but not a trooper of the Seventh dared to be caught off-guard. The crimson spurts of encircling red rifles flashed around them. Yonder in the valley, leaping shapes were silhouetted by fires—warriors cavorting in triumphant scalp dances. Yet the night brought one cheering event. Lieutenant De Rudio and the troopers who had been cut off with him in the timber during the retreat and had lain hidden there, stole out and managed to rejoin their comrades on the hill.

On through the black hours constantly recurred a sound, more nerve-racking than the whistling bullets or the savage whooping of the scalp dancers—discordant blasts of a trumpet. At first, exhausted troopers raised heads in hope that the blaring heralded a rescue by relieving troops. Soon they realized that some Indian was sounding those calls to mock them.

Peter, listening in his rifle pit, felt his flesh creep. The dead body of one of his fellow-trumpeters must have been stripped of that instrument. But for Bran, it might have been Peter's body.

At first daylight, a storm of whirring arrows and bullets broke on the besieged with redoubled intensity. Brief squalls of rain beat down to tantalize the thirsty. Captain Benteen walked coolly around the circuit of entrenchments, ordering men to keep under cover as they fired. An Irish sergeant called to him:

"Captain, sor, ye tell us to kape down. It's yourself should do that. They'll git ye."

Benteen answered with a grin: "Oh, pshaw, they can't hit me." He strode on unscathed, but a bullet plowed through the sergeant's leg, smashing the bone.

Closer, steadily closer, crawled the Sioux and Cheyenne riflemen. On the north side of the hill they slipped in near enough to launch a charge. The furious red onrush almost carried the trenches. One bold warrior came hurtling through the blue line and counted coup on a soldier he had killed before he himself was riddled.

Captain Benteen forced Reno to order a counter-attack. It was the white-haired officer who led it personally. He stood up under heavy fire, while troopers crouched for a spring out of the trenches, and shouted above the din:

"All ready now, men. Now's your time. Give 'em hell. Hep, hep, here we go!"

They surged forward cheering—all but one trooper, who lay in his rifle pit, crying like a child. Before that valiant sortie, the savages gave way and fled. Not one man in the assaulting wave was hit, and set faces relaxed into grins, as Benteen and his men came back on the double to the position. There they found the soldier who had been unable to make himself join his charging comrades, inert in his rifle pit, an Indian bullet through his head.

It was only a respite, that charge. From bluffs above the hill, red snipers poured in fire from repeating rifles, bought from Rick and other white traders. Outranged carbines vainly replied. Indian bullets dropped more of the defenders, and horses and mules in the hollow reared, kicked and collapsed under the hail of death.

From between his jutting blinders, Old Pizen glared about him. He was thirsty and tired of standing under the weight of two cases of ammunition, packed on his back, so that cartridges could be rushed to one of the more distant parts of the firing line in an emergency. Now he smelled the slaughter around him, and decided it was high time he left this place. Cleverly he unloosed the knot of his tie-rope with his teeth, and trotted out of the hollow and on through the position.

"Stop that mule!" an officer shouted. The loss of two cases of the precious ammunition would be a catastrophe for the troopers.

Old Pizen was not accustomed to being stopped by anybody when he had made up his mind. Troopers made futile grabs for his halter. The mule dodged others trying to head him off. He cleared a front-line barricade like a steeplechaser, and with stubborn determination loped toward the Indian lines.

Out there in the open he met swarms of those same leaden wasps which had tried to sting him in the hollow. Old Pizen emitted a defiant bray and went for them. His charge and his fearsome appearance in big flapping blinders seemed to have dismayed the wasps in front, for no more buzzed at him. Warriors held their fire and waited, for this strange creature to bring them two free cases of ammunition.

Hoofs thudded behind him. Pizen recognized the black horse and rider as they cut in front of him. Peter Shannon had hastily bridled Justin, mounted him bareback and raced after the long-eared recreant.

But Pizen was not returning to that hill, not even for a friend. The mule darted off at an angle. Peter, in hot pursuit, headed him again. Old Pizen, like a full-rigged schooner, came about on the opposite tack.

Flights of wasps descended on them, buzzing more wickedly than ever. Peter heard faint shouts from the trenches, "Come in, come in!" He rode on in that crazy, reckless chase. The black Morgan, responding to rein

and knee, was deft as a polo pony, but Old Pizen, laden though he was, matched him. Again and again, Peter missed his grasp for the dangling tie-rope. For an incredible twenty minutes the chase continued. Once Pizen was blocked off so close to the Indian line that yelping redskins rose to drag Peter from his horse. He whirled and galloped clear of clutching hands.

On the next turn, Peter caught the rope at last. Old Pizen gave one final, indignant tug, then allowed himself to be led back up the slope, through cheering troopers and into the hollow. Peter, wondering why he was still alive, slid from Justin's back, and leaning on his horse, steadied himself while he weakly patted a heaving black flank. Somebody came up behind him. Peter turned to look into Benteen's flushed face and to feel the firm clasp of the Captain's hand, wringing his.

THE battle-weary men on the hill could scarcely believe their senses. That storm of arrows and bullets, which had beaten down on them for so many hours, was dying away into fitful gusts. Dashes to the river for water drew only desultory bursts of fire now.

Down in the valley they sighted billowing smoke—the Indians had fired the prairie grass. Through the dun pall, the Seventh beheld the host of the Sioux and Cheyennes marching away, a dark, moving mass of horsemen, three miles long and almost a mile wide. Haggard officers and troopers stared incredulously and distrustfully after the vanishing foe, and a few hoarse voices sent up a weak cheer.

"Stand fast!" Word was passed along the entrenchments. "It's an Indian trick!"

All the rest of the day, all that night, they stood to arms. It seemed well they did, for next morning a long cloud of dust spiraled up along the valley. Troopers in the rifle pits grasped their carbines again and waited grimly. Now, as before, there could be no thought of surrender. Better to die fighting than be massacred.

But blue uniforms shone through the dust haze. Terry and Gibbon had come at last! The relieving force, horse and foot, wound up the hill.

Even the joy of rescue was dimmed by the anxious query each force put to the other: "Where's Custer?" No man could answer.

A party rode out, making a cautious reconnaissance. Lieutenant Godfrey leveled his field glasses toward the knoll which would be known as Custer Hill. It was dotted with objects which appeared to be white boulders. Another look, and the officer almost dropped his glasses. Laconically he announced: "The dead!"

As they moved forward Captain Weir murmured: "Oh, how white they look! How white!" Sadly they surveyed the stripped bodies of Custer and the two hundred and eleven officers and men of the Seventh, the civilians and scouts, who had died with him. All had been scalped and mutilated, save only Custer. Even in death, the Indians had respected him. Gazing down with the rest at the fallen leader, Peter gave him a last salute.

On all that stricken field remained no living creature. Wait—yonder stood a horse, head drooping beside the corpse of his master, a horse so sorely wounded that the Indians had not bothered to drive him off with their herds. It was Comanche, Captain Keogh's bay charger. Gently they tended his wounds and led him slowly back to camp. If he lived, he would be taken along with Reno's wounded troopers and put aboard the *Far West*, waiting on the Yellowstone River.

As the melancholy task of burial commenced, Peter strode up to Captain Benteen.

"Sir, Corporal Shannon requests permission to find and bury his dog."

Peter, after the battle ended, had told his commander about Bran's sacrifice in the ravine. Benteen's eyes softened. "Go ahead, Shannon," he granted permission.

Sorrowfully, Peter mounted Justin and retraced the ride he had made with Custer's last message. In the ravine, the two warriors he had shot still lay where they had dropped. The Indians, who had carried off all their other dead and wounded, had not discovered these two, nor the corpse of Rick. Beside the renegade, with his ghastly torn throat, Peter saw the tawny form of his staghound.

The trumpeter dismounted, and with one hand resting on his saddle pommel, stood looking down at the hound's still body. Justin lowered his head in sympathy and sniffed at his canine friend. Tears welled up in Peter's eyes. It was supposed to be unmanly to cry, but no one was here to see. And if you loved a dog, a dog that had given his life for you, you had every right to mourn him from the depths of your heart. Peter bent down to stroke the shaggy form for the last time.

He gave a sudden start. Bran's body was still warm. Peter grasped his canteen, raised the dog's head and poured water down his throat. In a little while eyes half glazed opened and gazed into his. The feathered tail stirred in one feeble wag.

Quickly the trooper unrolled his blanket and folded it over Justin's withers in front of the saddle. As tenderly as he could, he lifted the limp staghound onto the padded rest. The strong Morgan, carrying double, walked with careful tread to camp.

IN a corner of the hold of the *Far West* lay the charger Comanche, and near him Bran reposed. Surgeons had treated them, and the spark of life, so near to extinction in both animals, had kindled again. Peter knew now that horse and dog would live to stand many a parade with the Seventh as honored veterans.

Peter, going up on deck, gratefully reflected on Benteen's kindness in letting him, unwounded though he was, travel on the steamer to take care of his dog, while the unhurt survivors of the Seventh marched back to the post. He stood beside the pilot-house where Captain Grant Marsh was conning the *Far West*, her paddlewheels churning, through the muddy waters of the river. Someone came up and spoke his name. It was Lieutenant Trelford, heavily bandaged right arm in a sling. Peter had heard how the officer got that wound, leading one of the charges that beat back the surge of the Sioux up Reno Hill.

"Shannon, Captain Benteen ordered me to give you these." Trelford pressed sergeant's chevrons into Peter's hand. "You deserve them—and a lot more."

"Thank you, sir."

"You're a good soldier, and I'll be the first to say so when the battle report goes in. Maybe that'll go part way toward evening us up for that time you shoved me clear of Old Pizen's heels."

The tall, handsome officer paused a moment, then went on more slowly. "Whether it squares us or not, I'm going to do something I've long intended doing when we get back to the Fort. I'm telling you this as man to man—not as officer to trooper. We're both in love with the same girl. First chance I get, I'm going to ask her to marry me."

"It's decent of you to tell me, Lieutenant."

"Struck me as only fair. Good luck to you, Shannon—every place else."
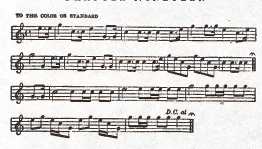
Peter, turning, glanced from the chevrons in his hand to Trelford's shoulder straps. He walked away, thinking sober thoughts.

Sally Ann, an officer's daughter, a sergeant's wife, living on Soapsuds Row? No, he could not imagine it, nor would he ask it. He could not beg her to wait on the distant chance that he might win a commission some day. His attitude was not snobbery. He knew fine women on the Row—Ma Simmons, laundress and cook for the Lindsays, and Sergeant Pinchon's wife in the

Fourth, others in the Seventh. Neither he nor Sally Ann were snobs. Yet it was inescapably true that you were happiest among people with interests in common with yours, people whose upbringing and education compared to that which you had been fortunate enough to have received.

Peter sighed deeply. Best buy out of the Service and go back to college. Maybe Sally Ann would marry him when he graduated and give up the Army life she loved.

Chapter Nineteen





Crisp autumn days had come again to Fort Abraham Lincoln. In the summer following the Battle of Little Big Horn, the Seventh, its ranks filled, had fought the Sioux again. In a forthcoming campaign, it would strike them once more, recapturing its lost guidons, redeeming defeat, restoring the proud tradition it would maintain on other battlefields in years ahead.

Peter Shannon stood in a doorway, gazing across the drill-ground, his mind dwelling on the crowded events of the months that had passed since he returned to the post.

There was that stirring day he and others had been called out in front of the paraded regiment. General Terry had pinned a medal on his blouse, a medal whose blue ribbon gleamed with white stars, the Medal of Honor.

Now the words of the citation rang again in his head like a pæan. *"Service performed in action, of such conspicuous character as to clearly distinguish the man for gallantry and intrepidity above his comrades . . . . service that involved extreme jeopardy of life or the performance of extraordinarily hazardous duty."* Words that signalized those minutes on Reno Hill—his gallop on Justin through the leaden wasps—perverse Old Pizen, caught at last.

Peter twisted his head to glance down at his shoulders. What he saw there brought back the later day, no less thrilling, when he opened a War Department envelope and scanned the lines on the crinkling paper within. "The President tenders Sergeant Peter Shannon, Seventh U. S. Cavalry, a commission as Second Lieutenant in the United States Army."

That had given him these gold-bordered shoulder straps he wore so proudly. And they, in turn, had carried him through to the happiness before him on this bright autumn day.

Peter's revery was interrupted by a figure in civilian clothes coming up behind him in the doorway. John Shannon said: "Time we reported for duty at the chapel, Lieutenant Shannon. Come on, my boy."

Father and son strode across the drill-ground, walking in step like the soldiers they were.

The music of a prelude, pouring from a foot-pumped organ, filled the little chapel. Peter and John Shannon, bridegroom and best man, took their stand in the chancel. Peter glanced, smiling, at Mrs. Lindsay, at all the women of the post, and his comrades of the Seventh in the pews. There sat Phil Trelford too, good loser and good sport. A wave of sadness swept Peter as he thought of those who were not present: His own dear mother—if only she had lived to see this day! The dashing, yellow-haired General, his commander and in many ways his idol. Mrs. Custer, forlorn but brave in her grief. Peter told himself that the first leave he got, he and Sally Ann would go to Michigan to see her and the faithful Eliza. A pity Eliza was missing this wedding she had looked forward to so eagerly!

The solemn and joyous strains of the wedding march resounded. Up the aisle on the arm of her father came Sally Ann. Peter knew that never had he beheld anyone so utterly lovely.

"For better for worse, for richer for poorer; in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part, according to God's holy ordinance; and thereto I plight thee my troth."

They took them, those tremendous vows, with all their young hearts, knowing that none had need to keep them more steadfastly than an Army girl and soldier on the frontier in the Indian wars.

The chaplain said the final words and stepped back. Peter took his bride in his arms and kissed her. They walked down the aisle, Sally Ann hugging her husband's arm tight. The last notes of the organ were drowned by the blare of the Seventh's band outside, striking up "Garryowen." On through the door of the chapel they moved, and underneath flashing steel where drawn sabers formed an arch. At its end waited the beaming MacTavish, one hand grasping the bridle of a black horse, the other the leash of a tawny staghound.

Author's Afterword

Among the chief sources for this story's incidents and background were Mrs. Custer's books and my own "Indian-Fighting Army." I have followed history quite closely except for some compression of time and the use of certain episodes, such as the mule-race, out of their chronological occurrence.

There is historical basis for the introduction of a dog on the battleground of the Little Big Horn. One chronicler quotes Burkman, Custer's orderly, as stating that when the staghounds were left at the Seventh Cavalry's Powder River base, a yellow dog broke loose and trotted after the troops. A second historian adds that a dog, not an Indian one, was seen on the battlefield, moving among the dead.

The depiction of Custer and his actions in the campaign, over which controversy still rages, follows the presentation I made in "Indian-Fighting Army."

I robbed Burkman of one of his functions, the care of Custer's dogs, to give it to my character MacTavish. Special acknowledgment must be made of two other substitutions. In this story my Peter Shannon replaces in the course of the battle two actual troopers of the Seventh, who must here be given credit for gallant deeds. It was Trumpeter John Martin (born Martini), who carried Custer's last message to Benteen: Sergeant Richard P. Hanley, Company C, won the Medal of Honor for rounding up the fugitive ammunition-mule under heavy fire on Reno Hill.

Brevet rank, now disused, was confusing in those days when it was conferred in lieu of a decoration for gallantry and it would be equally so in these pages. Consequently, except in the case of General Custer, whose actual rank in 1876 was lieutenant colonel, my narrative refers to officers of the Seventh by their roster rank and employs their brevet designation only in direct discourse.

Fairfax Downey

Who's Who *in this* Issue



Rear Admiral Ageton

RETIRED at his own request after twenty-eight years of active service, Rear Admiral Arthur A. Ageton, is best known in Navy circles for his many useful and important contributions to the science of navigation and to thousands of Naval Reserve Officers for "The Naval Officer's Guide" (1943).

A graduate of the Naval Academy in the Class of 1923, Admiral Ageton was chief navigation instructor at the Naval Academy on Pearl Harbor Day.

While on duty at the Naval Academy, Admiral Ageton made his greatest contribution to the teaching of navigation when he designed, wrote many of the scripts, and supervised in detail the production of the long series of Navy training films in surface and air navigation.

To sea duty in July of 1943, he served as Executive Officer of the battleship *Washington* in the Gilbert and Marshall Island campaigns. In August, 1944, still a commander, he assumed command of famous LST Flotilla Three, and directed its activities in command of task groups of assault landing craft throughout the Philippine Campaign from Leyte Beachhead to Lingayen Gulf. For his performance of duty at Leyte, he was awarded the Bronze Star Medal.

Under Admiral Turner and Commodore Knowles, Admiral Ageton commanded an assault landing ship task unit of Task Group 51, landing combat teams of Marines on the Northern Hagushi Beaches. Admiral Ageton finished the War as Control Officer on Admiral Turner's Pacific Amphibious Forces staff. For all of these amphibious services in combat against the enemy, Admiral Ageton was awarded the Legion of Merit Medal.

Kenneth H. Cassens

ON August 20, 1906, I came to light in Rockland, Maine; and the disgusted look on the stork's beak was purely coincidental.

Did a four-year stretch in Colby College; 1928 found me, matrimony and the depression racing neck and neck. I spent two and a half years in Philadelphia, at the Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, but failed to complete the course, for the depression won. Twelve years in the ministry followed, ending in complete failure to get into the armed forces as a chaplain.

But the partial deafness, flat feet and some other twenty defects did not prevent the East Yard of the New England Shipbuilding Company from hiring me as a shipfitter, and I fit the late war there for two and a half years.

Except for sundry poems, letters and newspaper columns and articles, I had never seriously tried my hand at writing. Having a typewriter and a couple of darn' good encyclopedias, I lit out for the postoffice and a book of stamps. "Bull Dance" (June Blue Book) was the first successful fiction to result. This story, by the way, grew out of an interest in the Minoan civilization dating back to college days.

In the course of the years, I have fathered six children, the oldest of whom, now in the Army, will probably read these words in the Philippine Islands, where he is serving as an Army machinist. The other five are at home, all eating heartily beyond their income-tax exemption value.



Kenneth H. Cassens



Pete Pedersen

I WAS born of respectable parents July 4, 1920, in a healthy community called Rainier Beach, near Seattle.

Am of Danish-Irish descent, and singularly free of the adventurous background which seems to qualify most struggling writers (i.e., never a roustabout, bellhop, dice-game shill, gold miner, or soldier in the Spanish Civil War. I did manage a box-fighter once; it proved unremunerative. Dempsey's Law—when you're close enough to hit the other guy, he's close enough to hit you—was my man's undoing.)

Attended the University of Washington, and was one of those ath-a-letes who "scrimmaged sitting down." A quite ordinary oarsman on some extraordinary crews, my only recollection of the whole thing was that on each day of those four glorious college years I was tired.

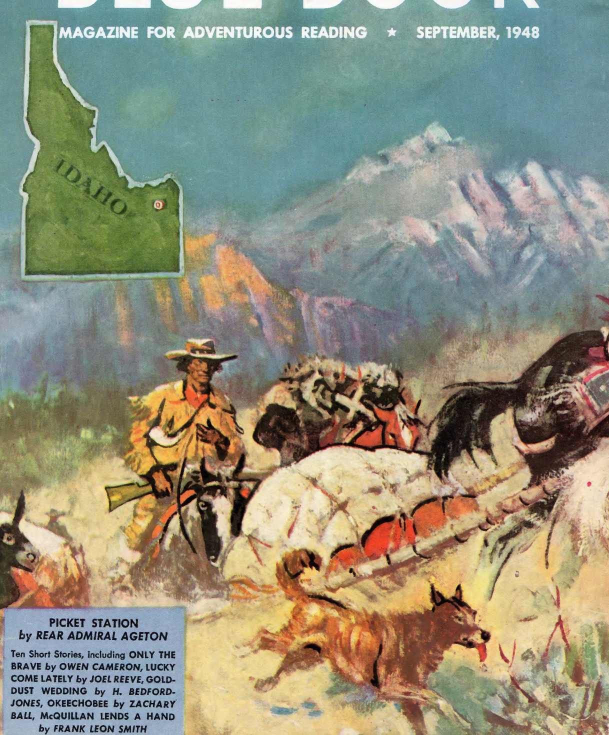
Graduated in the school of journalism, and after a stretch as a Navy Air Corps jockey, I went to work handling race-track publicity. This seemed to make as much sense as anything else, and it remains an admirable retreat for any journalism student spawned on an unsuspecting world.

Sold my first story—a boxing yarn—to *Collier's* while an undergraduate. I naturally wondered how long this had been going on, and spent several years finding that the apparent answer was—long enough. I've recently acquired a charming wife, and then two infant sons in rapid succession. All three seem a bit suspicious about this writing business. My most ardent interests—stud poker, Leadbelly's singing, and a paid-up membership in Horseplayers Anonymous.

Ambition: To summon enough courage to turn out a worth-while novel.

BLUE BOOK

MAGAZINE FOR ADVENTUROUS READING ★ SEPTEMBER, 1948



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